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IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

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The IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, founded in 1923, encourages interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds in Iowa and seeks to unite those who have these interests in common. *Iowa Bird Life* and *I.O.U. News* are quarterly publications of the Union.

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Thomas H. Kent, Editor, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246

Carl J. Bendorf, Circulation & Fall Field Reports Editor, 825 7th Ave., Iowa City, IA 52240

W. Ross Silcock, Christmas Bird Count & Winter Field Reports Editor, Box 300, Tabor, IA 51653

James J. Dinsmore, Summer Field Reports Editor, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010

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INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Original manuscripts, notes, letters (indicate if for publication), editorials, and other materials relating to birds and bird finding in Iowa should be sent to the editor. Accepted manuscripts will generally be published promptly, depending on space available, with the following absolute deadlines: 15 November for the Winter issue; 15 February for the Spring issue; 15 May for the Summer issue; and 15 July for the Fall issue. Most manuscripts will be refereed. All material should be typed double-spaced or hand printed in ink on 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper. Authors should pattern their style after a current issue of the journal. If you want more detailed guidelines or advice regarding the appropriateness of your topic for *Iowa Bird Life*, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the editor.

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*19-21 May 1989, Davenport

FIELD REPORTS

Anyone observing birds in Iowa is encouraged to report their findings on a quarterly basis to the Field Reports editors. Sample reporting and documentation forms suitable for duplication are available from the editor (send self-addressed stamped envelope to T. H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246). An article describing the reporting process is also available.

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IOWA BIRDLINE 319-338-9881

The birdline is a recorded summary of interesting recent bird sightings in Iowa. At the end of the report you can leave a message and report recent sightings. Be sure to give your name and phone number as well as the location of the bird and date seen. Call in as soon as possible after sighting a rare bird. Jim Fuller checks the reports daily and updates the recording on Monday, so make sure Sunday sightings are reported by Sunday night.

I.O.U. NEWS

Send items of interest for the newsletter to the editors (J. Hank and Linda Zaletel, 715 West St., Colo, IA 50056).

MATERIALS AVAILABLE

The following materials may be obtained by writing the editorial office (Iowa Bird Life, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246):

- *Order form for back issues of *Iowa Bird Life*: send self-addressed stamped envelope.
- *Field Checklist of Iowa Birds--1987 Edition: 10 for \$1.65, 25 for \$3.50, 100 for \$11.60, postpaid. Also available at annual meetings for \$0.10 each.

REPORTING NEBRASKA BIRDS

Sightings of Nebraska birds, including those within the Nebraska portion of De Soto N.W.R., should be reported to Loren and Babs Padelford, 1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, NE 68005. Formats for reporting and documentation are the same as for Iowa.

ADDRESS CHANGES

Please send address changes/corrections to Francis Moore, 336 Fairfield St., Waterloo, IA 50703.

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MEET AN IOWA BIRDER: FRANCIS MOORE

ROBERT CECIL

It is hard to imagine anyone ever attending and I.O.U. meeting, or anyone engaged in serious birding in Iowa not running into Francis Moore. While his boundless energy and sense of humor might be the first field marks observed, it is his knowledge of Iowa birds that makes the more lasting impression. In addition to at least 3000 megabytes of stored information on bird songs, plumages, and other relevant and irrelevant bird lore, Francis is also conversant in other areas of natural history. When not picking out a distant bird by its call note or identifying some peep sandpiper, he can probably tell you what kind of butterfly flew by, or what kind of plant you just stepped on.



Francis' interest in nature and his special interest in birds began when he was six, with the gift from his mother of the *Golden Guide to Birds*, enabling him to begin identifying birds around his family's farm near Bloomfield. He recounts his experiences with catching young Upland Sandpipers, and identifying a Bohemian Waxwing and a Yellow-headed Blackbird in his yard, both good finds for his part of the state. He soon graduated to reaching into hollow trees and pulling out Screech Owls for closer inspection!

In 1971, at age 21, Francis' life took a major turn with his enlistment in the U.S. Navy. The promise of the recruiter to "see the world" came true for him when he was stationed aboard the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Saratoga. His tours took him to the Philippines, Singapore, Hong Kong, Spain, Italy, Turkey, and Vietnam. Unfortunately for this now-active lister, his mind was then on other things. "All I can remember seeing was a Philippine Kingfisher," he reports. Not even a gull?

A second major turn took place during his Navy duty. In 1972, he married Peggy Tuttle of Corydon, whom he first met at Indian Hills Community College in Centerville. His last months in the Navy were spent in Virginia, where the state's wealth of bird life rekindled his old birding fires. On one outing to Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge near Virginia Beach, a fellow birder was discussing listing, and Francis decided he would start his life list. Just then, a Northern Gannet plunged into the bay, and Francis had his first tic. Active again, he compiled an excellent Virginia list of 244 species before returning to Iowa in 1978. Soon after, he began working for Advanced Systems in Waterloo as an accountant, where he is still employed.

In early 1978, Francis attended a Waterloo Audubon Society meeting, and met two persons who were to stimulate his birding interest and skill. The

first was the venerable Russell Hayes, one of the patriarches of Iowa birding. The other was a fledgling but eager Bob Myers. The latter relationship became a friendly but active rivalry in the pursuit of Iowa rarities.

One of Francis' first trips in the Waterloo area yielded two exceptional finds: a Sharp-tailed Sparrow and Iowa's first modern record of a Mississippi Kite. Francis, still fresh from Virginia where these species are expected, did not recognize their rarity and matter-of-factly added them to the day's list total. He acknowledged that there was more than a little skepticism among the other birders. The skepticism regarding the Kite was to last for several years until Francis produced his original field notes, and the sighting was reviewed and accepted by the Records Committee.

Francis has been active in the Iowa Ornithologists' Union since joining in 1979, and began the office of Secretary in 1982. In 1986 he was elected Treasurer, an office he continues to hold. In recognition of his birding skills and acumen, he was appointed to a six-year term on the Records Committee in 1987.

Despite having risen among the ranks of Iowa birders, Francis never hesitates to assist and encourage new birders. I first met him at the 1984 Spring I.O.U. meeting at Indianola, when I was still brilliant green. Despite my inexperience, he took me under his wing, and even promised to come to southeast Iowa and show me some birds. To my surprise, he lived up to his promise, and took me on my first trip to Lacey-Keosauqua State Park. That day, he showed me my first Kentucky, Yellow-throated, and Worm-eating warblers, as well as White-eyed Vireo, Acadian Flycatcher, and others. He urged me to listen to birds as well as to look for them, and inspired me to search out other birding areas in Lee County, perhaps at Shimek Forest. He told me that sometimes, people keep lists of birds they have seen.

Francis has become one of the top listers in the state. His proudest birding possession is Iowa's first Curlew Sandpiper found on 10 May 1985 at Cedar Lake in Nashua. Francis also contributes to the increase in Iowa ornithological knowledge in other ways. He has annually conducted two Breeding Bird Surveys, and now compiles both the Waterloo-Cedar Falls and the Bremer County Christmas Bird Counts. He is a regular contributor to the *Iowa Bird Life* Field Reports, and has contributed articles and field notes.

In addition to his contributions to the I.O.U. and Iowa birding, Francis' other activities read like a Who's Who of workaholics. He is currently vice-president of the Waterloo Audubon Society, and former President and Secretary. He is founder and current President of the 300 member National Audubon chapter of the Prairie Rapids Audubon Society in Waterloo-Cedar Falls. Non-birding activities include being a Second Degree Black Belt in Tae Kwon-do, a form of Korean Karate, and a Vice-president of the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Chapter of the National Association of Accountants. Amid all this activity, he still finds time to be a father to his daughter, Stacey, now eight years old.

The next time you are out in the field on the track of some accidental Iowa bird and run into Francis Moore, follow him around for awhile, if you can. You'll laugh, you'll learn, and you'll undoubtedly see more birds than you expected to.

1315 41st St., Des Moines, Iowa 50311

RAPTOR REHABILITATION IN IOWA

ANDREW S. FIX, D.V.M.

Raptor rehabilitation is an increasingly prominent activity for many universities, public and private nature centers, and individuals. An awareness of the decline of raptor numbers in the wild has contributed, at least in part, to the popularity of the care and rehabilitation of injured birds of prey. Much of this heightened awareness developed during the 1960s, primarily from the discovery of detrimental pesticide effects on raptor reproduction (Cooper 1983). Although several decades ago information on rehabilitation was limited, the field has now become quite integrated with participation by a number of specialists, including veterinarians, pathologists, microbiologists, biochemists, toxicologists, state wildlife departments, and rehabilitators (Cooper and Greenwood 1981). There are many sources that thoroughly address specific details of the rehabilitation process (Cooper 1978, Coles 1985, Fowler 1986, McKeever 1987). The purpose of this paper is to examine the status of raptor rehabilitation in Iowa by reviewing active programs, report the findings of some of these programs, and enhance understanding of the subject by compiling and providing information on the subject.

Iowa State University maintains a raptor rehabilitation center at the College of Veterinary Medicine in Ames. After its initiation in 1984, the center was officially named the Wildlife Care Clinic in 1986. Although wildlife species of all types are treated, the majority of patients are injured raptors found in central Iowa. In addition to care and treatment of injured raptors, a key objective of this program is the education of interested veterinary students on various medical and surgical rehabilitation techniques. Data generated from case studies during 1986 and 1987 show that of the 60 birds treated, 75 percent were presented for traumatic injuries, primarily involving automobile accidents, shooting, and trapping (Barrows and Fix 1987). This closely parallels what other programs have reported in the literature (Duke, Redig, and Jones 1981; Keran 1981). Raptors not surviving treatment are currently being studied for pesticide residues in tissue. The Wildlife Care Clinic is staffed by student volunteers of the college's Zoo, Exotic, and Wildlife Club and depends on donations for much of its support. Veterinarians that have made a significant personal commitment toward this project include Susan Barrows, Mary Ann Nieves, Kathy Owen, and Carolyn Runyon. Contact can be made through the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences, Veterinary Teaching Hospital, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011 (515-294-4900).

The Macbride Raptor Center is a raptor rehabilitation and public education program jointly sponsored by the University of Iowa and Kirkwood Community College. This project is based at Kirkwood Community College and at the Macbride Nature Recreation Area near Solon. Originally begun in 1985 under the sponsorship of the University of Iowa, this program has recently expanded to include support from the Animal Health Technology Program and the Parks and Natural Resources Program at Kirkwood. Currently about 60 to 70 birds a year are treated. A primary objective of this program is public education and awareness. In 1988, over 100 educational programs were presented by staff and volunteers at the center and surrounding

locations in eastern Iowa. The center maintains a permanent outdoor exhibit complete with a self-guided tour of 10 raptor species and a new flight cage. Responsibility and control of this program is shared by Burke Thayer, Jodeane Cancilla, Kathy Kelly, Steve Atherton, and Anne Duffy. Veterinary services are provided by Greg Zimmerman and Stan Holst. Interested individuals are encouraged to contact the Division of Recreational Services, E216 Field House, University of Iowa, Iowa City 52242 (319-335-9293).

The Iowa Wildlife Rehabilitators Association provides services by licensed rehabilitators throughout much of the state of Iowa. This group, incorporated in 1986, is composed of dedicated individuals who donate time and talent to care for injured wildlife. Over 30 Iowa Wildlife Rehabilitators Association members currently hold permits for rehabilitation of state protected species. Additionally, some of these individuals also hold state and federal permits for rehabilitation of migratory or endangered species. Objectives of the Association include rehabilitation, dissemination of information to members, public education, and interaction with interested and appropriate state, federal, and conservation organizations. The Iowa Wildlife Rehabilitators Association also holds seminars and symposia periodically to educate interested individuals on rehabilitation techniques, procedures, and legalities. The Iowa Wildlife Rehabilitators Association interacts with regional and national groups with similar interests. Although only about eight states have their own association, the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association provides similar services throughout much of the country. Additional information may be obtained from Marlene Ehresman at the Iowa Wildlife Rehabilitators Association office, RR #4, Box 249, Boone, Iowa 50036 (515-432-8186).

The State of Iowa Department of Natural Resources maintains a Wildlife Research Station at Ledges State Park near Boone. In recent years, this facility has been instrumental in several aspects of raptor rehabilitation and reintroduction. Currently funded through the Iowa Nongame Program that was established by the 1982 Fish and Wildlife Protection Fund, the Wildlife Research Station undertakes rehabilitation of threatened and endangered species, including many raptors. Cooperative efforts with the Wildlife Care Clinic at Iowa State University have produced many successful raptor reintroductions in the past several years. A large flight cage helps nongame biologists and wildlife technicians recondition raptors for release. The Nongame program assumes responsibility for over 400 wildlife species statewide, but has been forced to limit specific rehabilitation aid to threatened or endangered species. Raptors in this category include Red-shouldered Hawk, Northern Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, Common Barn-Owl, Burrowing Owl, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle, Short-eared Owl, and Long-eared Owl. Fortunately, some of the Nongame Program's manpower and financial pressure has been relieved by the increasing number of qualified private rehabilitators who are providing aid to many common raptor species.

In addition to rehabilitation efforts, the Wildlife Research Station has also released over 400 Common Barn-Owls from 1983 to 1987 through a captive rearing/reintroduction program. This program utilized 44 sites in 28 counties and radiotracked 36 individual owls after release. Although post-reintroduction Common Barn-Owl sightings increased over pre-release sightings by a factor of 10, predation by other raptors, particularly Great Horned Owls, made a considerable negative impact on released barn owl populations

(Ehresman, Reeves, and Schlarbaum 1988). Other attempts have also been made at reintroduction of this species (Warburton 1983). The Wildlife Research Station maintains a computerized record of sightings and encourages continued reports. Key individuals assisting with past and present rehabilitation efforts include Bruce Ehresman, Pat Schlarbaum, Doug Reeves, and Laura Jackson. Contact them at RR #1, Boone, Iowa 50036 (515-432-2823).

All organizations and individuals engaged in raptor rehabilitation must conform to specific state and federal regulations. Permits for rehabilitating or possessing species protected by the State of Iowa are handled by the Natural Resource Commission of the Department of Natural Resources (Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319). In addition to state permits, federal permits are required for rehabilitation of federally protected migratory birds and are granted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Law Enforcement, 629 Federal Building, 210 Walnut Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50309. These federal regulations are based on the Migratory Bird Act signed in the early 1900s between the United States and Mexico, Japan, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union. Although both state and federal authorities are generally understanding of rehabilitation attempts made by non-licensed individuals, discovery of an injured raptor should be followed by notification of a Department of Natural Resources biologist or conservation officer as quickly as possible. Delivery of the injured bird to a licensed facility should be a priority. Strict compliance with regulations by everyone involved will prevent abuses of the system designed to help injured wildlife. For additional information on legalities and permits, contact Walt Kocal at the above address.

The impact that raptor rehabilitation programs have on free-ranging raptor populations is not well known. Several rehabilitation programs have indicated similar results concerning the fate of raptors presented for treatment. On the average, about 40 percent of birds are released, 25 percent become permanent cripples, and 35 percent die during treatment or require euthanasia (Wisecarver and Bogue 1974, Snelling 1975, Duke, Redig, and Jones 1981; Barrows and Fix 1987). Although a release rate of approximately 40 percent seems favorable, the fate of these birds is difficult to assess. Of 648 raptors released after rehabilitation in Minnesota during 1974 to 1980, 38 recoveries or resightings of radio-tagged or color-marked birds occurred (Duke, Redig, and Jones 1981). In this study, hawks were recovered much more often than owls, but were over ten times farther away from the release site. Differences in feeding habits and life history probably explain this discrepancy. Encouragingly, some evidence does exist that released Bald Eagles survive to nest and raise young (Duke, Redig, and Jones 1981). Other than previously cited data on the Common Barn-Owl program, no specific information exists concerning the impact raptor releases have on populations of free-ranging birds in Iowa.

Raptor rehabilitation provides a number of functions and services. In addition to saving lives and potentially impacting free-ranging populations, rehabilitation programs supply permanently crippled birds for captive propagation projects, educational programs, and scientific research. Treatment of common or abundant birds of prey in many programs may seem costly and unnecessary. However, the experience acquired through these efforts provides the expertise necessary to treat endangered species. It is with the

threatened and endangered species, as in the case of Bald Eagles, that reintroduction may positively influence natural populations. Perhaps the best service rehabilitation programs provide, however, is through public education. The utilization of injured birds in nature centers, zoos, and teaching centers allows many people the opportunity to personally observe these beautiful animals. This is especially important in regards to the education of children. In the long term, the heightened public awareness of raptors and their problems may improve efforts made toward raptor conservation and preservation.

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Department of Veterinary Pathology, College of Veterinary Medicine, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 1988

W. ROSS SILCOCK

The 42 reporting localities tied the record number set in three of the last four years. It would be nice to hit 50 in the next few years. Two new counts were at Glenwood and Saylorville, the latter impressive in habitat and participation. Lehigh and Fort Dodge did not report, but hope to be back next year.

The most exciting feature of this year's count was the new record species total of 135, which easily beat the old record of 127 set in 1980. The mild fall and early winter weather had to be the reason, as other count parameters such as number of observers and parties, temperature, and wind conditions were not significantly different from other years. While the past two winters have been mild also, each was marked by a cold snap prior to Christmas Bird Count time. This did not happen this year. An alternative theory is that it was just plain luck, or as a statistician might say, normally expected statistical variation.

Almost as exciting was the new single location high species count at Davenport, where no fewer than 87 species were found. This count, run by Pete Petersen (who, incidentally, has now participated in 186 Christmas Bird Counts!) has consistently been among the state's leaders. Indeed, of the 19 count totals with 75 or more species, Davenport has 14. The others were at Keokuk (2), Rathbun, Saylorville, and Shenandoah. Prior to this year the record was 82 species, achieved by Davenport twice (1969, 1975) and tied by Saylorville this year in its initial count. For the record, the top ten all-time counts are: (1) 87 at Davenport 1988; (2-4) 82 at Davenport 1969 and 1975, and Saylorville 1988; (5-7) 81 at Davenport 1972, 1973, and 1987; (8) 79 at Shenandoah 1987; (9-10) 78 at Davenport 1983 and Keokuk 1988.

There were no other counts this year in the 80s, but there were three in the 70s, all at expected locations: Keokuk (78), Shenandoah (71), and Burlington (70).

COUNT RESULTS BY REGION

The patterns established within regions continued this year, as each region continued to exhibit its characteristic features. The Mississippi River region was highlighted by Davenport's new record, and showed the usual high species diversity, with all but the northernmost count finding 66 or more species. A state high of 52 feeder party hours, no doubt contributed to Davenport's success.

The Missouri Valley region also has high species diversity, but its main characteristic is the large number of wintering waterfowl of two species, Snow Goose and Mallard. This year numbers were spectacular, with more than 200,000 Snow Geese at each of two locations, DeSoto N.W.R. and Shenandoah. The highest species total was the 71 at Shenandoah, while Omaha had the highest number of participants for the state (Iowa, that is) with 38.

In the Northern Third, characterized by low species diversity and fewer total birds, Decorah found an excellent 46 species to top the region. Swaledale was the coldest count statewide, recording a starting temperature of -5 F.

The Middle Third is where the people are, and consequently the counts. This year the debut of Saylorville was notable, with an excellent total of 82 species. Success was no doubt due to good participation and great habitat, along with the highest state party-hours total of 101. Cedar Rapids continued as one of the best "inland" counts in Iowa with 64 species.

Southern Third counts are somewhat of an enigma, but I believe the variability in species totals can be explained by the concentration of species near the major reservoirs at Red Rock and Rathbun, and the contrasting lack of concentration elsewhere because of generally open conditions allowing birds to forage and survive almost anywhere. As usual, Rathbun and Red Rock had good totals of 66 and 62, respectively.

REGULAR SPECIES

The most notable features of this year's count can be summarized briefly as: surprisingly average numbers of some species that might have been expected in higher numbers in such a mild winter (dabbling ducks and icterids); very high numbers of raptors; very high numbers of certain species often not common in Iowa in winter (Red-breasted Merganser, Ring-billed Gull); very high numbers of Paridae; the House Finch explosion; and the almost complete absence of winter finches, most notably Pine Siskin.

As might be expected, Great Blue Heron numbers were at a 10-year high, but two other occupants of similar habitat, Common Snipe and Killdeer, were present only in average numbers; however, 78 percent of the Great Blues were recorded at Burlington. Goose numbers were extraordinary. Greater White-fronteds were at a 10-year high, while Snows were unbelievable, with about 20% of the entire Missouri Flyway population located at DeSoto N.W.R. and Shenandoah, an estimated 521,000 birds. Not to be eclipsed was the remarkable 10-year high of 24,392 Canada Geese. Dabbling ducks were not present in great numbers, although species found in mild winters including Wood Duck, Gadwall, and American Wigeon were at or near 10-year highs. American Black Duck was plentiful with a 10-year high of 742 birds; the previous high was only 399 in 1985. Is this species expanding westward? Common Goldeneye numbers were at a 10-year high of 3,438, not far above the old high of 3,427, but Common Merganser was down sharply from last year's 11,882 at only 4,416. The most significant drop was for Canvasback with only 286 recorded, down from the last two glory years when 12,000 or more were found each year. Bob Cecil indicates that habitat change at the Keokuk Pool, where most of these birds had been found, may be responsible for the decrease.

This was an excellent year for raptors, with all species recording 10-year highs except Rough-legged Hawk. A notable high count was for Bald Eagle at 1,099, up from the previous high of 1,037 in 1986. A total of 80 accipiters were found, a new 10-year high. Red-shouldered Hawk was also present in good numbers, a welcome sign, with 12 birds found compared with the previous high in the last 10 years of 6. The 7 Merlins were a surprise; only 12 were recorded in the previous nine years.



*Merlin, Glenwood, 1 Jan 1989.
Photo by Doug Rose.*

Among gallinaceous birds, Wild Turkey finally levelled off at 686, down a little from last year's high of 782. Bobwhite were present in good numbers at 526, which is near the previous cycle highs in 1979-81, and in contrast to the lows of 100-400 seen in 1982-85.

Ring-billed Gull was at 10-year high levels, presumably wintering in numbers further north than usual, while Herring Gull was present in only average numbers.

Both doves, Mourning and Rock, were at 10-year highs, probably due to an extended breeding season in both cases, as well as more birds staying in Iowa rather than moving out in the case of Mourning Dove.

The owls continue to be recorded in very good numbers, most notably Barred, which was at a 10-year high. It will be interesting to see if this trend continues. In the case of Long-eared, Short-eared, and Northern Saw-whet owls, are we getting better at finding winter roosts? Most are still reported from central Iowa locations, with 11 Long-eareds at Saylorville and 10 at Boone County, 10 Short-eareds at Red Rock, and no fewer than 5 Saw-whets at Boone County.

Belted Kingfisher, as might be expected, was at a 10-year high of 141. Perhaps related to the high numbers of *Paridae*, Red-bellied, Downy, and Hairy woodpeckers were all at 10-year highs. All these species are hole-nesters. Is such habitat increasing, or is what we have better protected?

The lack of snow cover made field flocking species inconspicuous, with Horned Lark and Snow Bunting near 10-year lows, mild weather probably being more significant than absence of snow for the latter.

Crow numbers were again spectacular, with a 10-year high of no fewer than 57,625. During 1984-88 we recorded 35,000 or more each year, helped by large roosts, in contrast to the years 1979-83 when the high was 12,006.

As mentioned above, *Paridae* were present in good numbers, with both species continuing upward trends. Tufted Titmouse was at a 10-year high, and it is interesting to determine whether this is due to expansion of the population geographically or within the current range. The data for 1985 through 1988, when this species increased each year, indicate that the latter is the case, with numbers increasing in the Mississippi Valley region and Middle Third, but not elsewhere in Iowa. Perhaps this supports the suggestion that existing habitat is improving in some way (aging?) to the benefit of hole-nesters. This was not a Red-breasted Nuthatch year, with only 31 birds found, lowest since the miserable 6 of 1979. The 10-year high is 164 in 1981.

Carolina Wren has done well in recent winters, with 37 reported this year, in contrast to the total of only 10 birds found for the six-year period 1979-84. Counts for the last seven years are 1, 4, 4, 12, 23, 23, and 37.

There were 492 Eastern Bluebirds found, a 10-year high, compared with the 10-year average of 92 per year. Mild weather had to be a factor, but hopefully breeding success is being helped by the numerous bluebird nest boxes now in use in Iowa.

Fruit-eaters, in this case American Robin and Cedar Waxwing, were abundant, the latter at a 10-year high of 3,580 and the former at the third highest total in the last 10 years. The berry crop must have been attractive.

The distribution of shrikes was about as expected, although somewhat surprising was a Northern Shrike as far south as Muscatine. Loggerhead

Shrikes away from the Mississippi Valley were no further north than Princeton and Iowa City.

Northern Cardinal numbers have increased over the last few years, with 7,000 or more found each of the last three years, as compared with the high of only 4,812 for the period 1979-82. A 10-year high was recorded by American Tree Sparrow at 18,888, although numbers do not seem to vary tremendously from year to year, the 10-year average being 15,298. *Zonotrichia* sparrows increased in numbers this year, halting a downward trend in recent years: Harris and White-crowned sparrows doubled their average numbers of the last three years. Harris Sparrow has shown a curious distribution recently. Out of 240 found this year, 174 were in the Missouri Valley region as might be expected, but most of the rest (62) were in the Middle Third, 48 of these at Saylorville. Perhaps the Des Moines River valley provides the next best habitat close to the normal western range for this species, as numbers have been increasing there.

Blackbird numbers are difficult to analyze, except that there was no roost at Omaha this year, resulting in 10-year lows for Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, and Brown-headed Cowbird. Nevertheless, Rusty Blackbird apparently remained in Iowa, with a 10-year high of 456 birds, compared to an average of 152. Meadowlarks occurred in average numbers.

This was an average year for Purple Finch, but the amazing explosion of House Finch numbers continues. This species was first reported on the 1985 Christmas Bird Count, when two birds were seen. Since then the yearly totals were 13, 33, and 215. House Finches are now found in all parts of the state except the southwest, with three reported this year as far to the northwest as Cherokee. Other notable numbers were 16 at Mason City, 33 at Des Moines, and 15 at Ottumwa. Most other finches were essentially absent. The 67 Pine Siskins reported this year were meager compared to last year's total of 2,006. American Goldfinch, however, was abundant, reaching a 10-year high of 5,104.

Finally, some bad news. House Sparrow also reached a 10-year high of 63,605, about 25% above the previous high of 51,218 in 1984. Between this species and House Finch, Iowa might resemble Oahu in a few years (at least ornithologically!).

UNCOMMON SPECIES

Table 3 lists species that were recorded at three or fewer locations. These species in some cases are genuine rarities, while others are simply local in occurrence, such as Ross' Goose, Ruffed Grouse, or Glaucous Gull.

The all-time Iowa Christmas Bird Count species list stands at 201, and it seems that we continue to add new ones. Some rather gaudy species were added this year: a Brant at DeSoto N.W.R., accompanied by a Barrow's Goldeneye, and also a possible female of the latter species (judging by photos submitted). Two other species were reported which would be additions also, but each presents a dilemma that needs to be resolved. A Gray-cheeked Thrush was documented and is listed, but final acceptance must be left to the Illinois Christmas Bird Count Editor and/or Illinois Records Committee, as the bird was on the Illinois side in the Davenport circle. The other dilemma is Trumpeter Swan. In the past few winters family groups have started wintering in or passing through Iowa, most if not all from the established flock

Table 1. Count Data

Location	Date	Total Spec	Total Birds	Field Obs	Pts	Hr	Miles Car	Owl Fl	Feeder Hr	Temp L	Snow H	Wind	Sky a.m./p.m.
MISSISSIPPI RIVER													
1. Yellow R.F.	26 Dec	37	2047	6	3	21	155	8	1	1	1	20 30	cloudy, rain, sleet, snow
2. Dubuque	17 Dec	39	4,534	23	8	52	285	30	3	10	15	25	partly cloudy
3. Clinton	26 Dec	68	29,830	12	4	33	337	10	3	26	32	2	snow/rain, sleet
4. Princeton	22 Dec	68	8,292	9	4	36	355	12	4	27	42	0	cloudy/rain
5. Davenport	18 Dec	87	28,025	10	10	82	531	25	9	24	52	19	clear
6. Muscatine	17 Dec	89	11,151	10	4	36	382	10	4	8	17	30	partly cloudy
7. Oakville	19 Dec	69	39,805	8	4	35	272	10	3	30	58	0	partly cloudy
8. Burlington	17 Dec	70	5,321	11	4	32	186	18	1	5	30	22	partly cloudy
9. Keokuk	31 Dec	78	45,673	13	7	57	391	22	3	6	30	45	partly cloudy
MISSOURI RIVER													
10. Sioux City	17 Dec	60	11,362	27	11	77	368	52	4	2	2	17	partly cloudy
11. DeSoto NWR	12 Dec	63	331,124	34	8	65	441	38	2	23	58	0	partly cloudy/clear
12. Omaha NE	17 Dec	56	16,524	38	12	94	615	39	7	2	16	32	clear/partly cloudy
13. Glenwood	1 Jan	41	6,729	9	3	25	341	3	2	25	30	0	clear, snow
14. Shenandoah	27 Dec	71	260,491	9	3	27	268	13	1	5	12	25	partly cloudy
15. TriState	31 Dec	50	11,718	4	2	19	256	2	1	18	44	0	clear
NORTHERN THIRD													
16. Decorah	31 Dec	46	3,738	11	4	34	294	10	1	1	3	10	clear/partly cloudy
17. Bremer Co.	17 Dec	40	2,485	11	4	30	495	15	1	5	17	0	partly cloudy
18. Mason City	17 Dec	38	6,057	14	6	42	320	12	4	12	16	24	cloudy/partly cloudy
19. Swaledale	29 Dec	19	870	4	3	6	50	2	1	4	40	-5	clear
20. Spirit Lake	17 Dec	31	6,066	9	5	49	247	24	1	27	36	17	partly cloudy
21. Cherokee	17 Dec	41	4,478	11	5	35	376	5	1	7	28	14	partly cloudy/clear
22. Westfield	3 Jan	34	1,756	5	3	21	161	11	2	24	39	0	clear
MIDDLE THIRD													
23. Lost Nation	16 Dec	51	4,759	13	5	31	302	9	2	8	4	0	cloudy/snow
24. North Linn	28 Dec	48	4,365	10	5	45	420	15	4	12	5	23	partly cloudy/clear
25. Cedar Rapids	17 Dec	64	13,185	24	13	90	440	60	4	18	35	15	cloudy/partly cloudy
26. Iowa City	17 Dec	52	13,454	27	8	65	468	24	1	1	2	18	partly cloudy
27. Amana	30 Dec	38	1,050	5	1	7	78	4	1	24	44	0	clear
28. Cedar Falls	18 Dec	50	2,694	6	3	20	153	8	2	6	24	0	partly cloudy
29. Marshalltown	17 Dec	40	4,270	24	9	48	331	21	1	10	27	18	partly cloudy, snow/clear
30. Eldora	16 Dec	29	1,323	3	2	10	94	3	1	2	6	-2	partly cloudy/cloudy
31. Ames	17 Dec	51	26,876	36	10	78	331	55	1	7	23	13	cloudy, snow/partly cloudy
32. Alleman	1 Jan	27	2,190	3	1	10	66	1	1	10	25	1	clear/partly cloudy
33. Saylorsville	18 Dec	82	35,518	37	12	101	566	84	2	14	56	0	partly cloudy
34. Des Moines	26 Dec	54	18,644	12	6	34	192	21	1	3	4	27	cloudy, rain
35. Boone Co.	2 Jan	52	7,388	32	12	78	391	59	4	10	45	5	partly cloudy/clear
36. Jamaica	20 Dec	60	18,835	7	4	37	400	17	4	1	4	30	cloudy/partly cloudy
37. Sac County	17 Dec	32	2,547	17	7	42	173	48	3	4	14	17	partly cloudy/clear
SOUTHERN THIRD													
38. Ottumwa	1 Jan	48	3,590	11	4	32	215	6	1	28	36	0	clear/cloudy
39. Rathbun	17 Dec	66	28,405	28	11	77	830	10	5	13	35	20	partly cloudy
40. Red Rock	18 Dec	62	13,575	17	8	35	259	4	1	5	20	23	clear
41. Lucas	17 Dec	35	1,688	11	5	32	180	13	1	15	20	0	clear/partly cloudy
42. Lamoni	17 Dec	27	1,742	4	2	15	115	1	1	14	30	0	partly cloudy/clear
TOTAL			1,042,172	630									

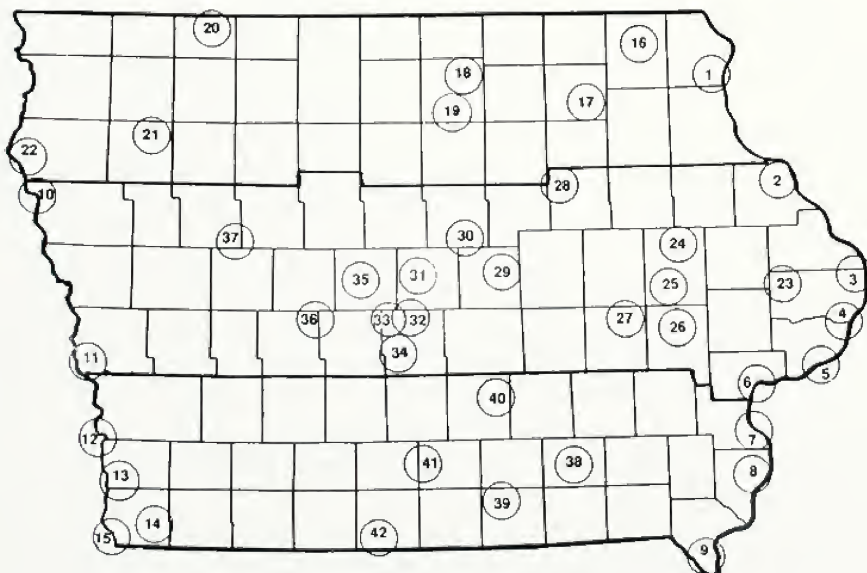


Table 2. Christmas Bird Count Data 1988

[illegible]

Table 3. Species Found on Three or Fewer Counts and Unidentified Birds

Pied-billed Grebe: Des Moines (1), Rathbun (1)
American White Pelican: Burlington (1, in Iowa and Illinois)
Double-crested Cormorant: Davenport (2)
Tundra Swan: Keokuk (7), Red Rock (1)
Trumpeter Swan: Des Moines (3; not included in count total)
Mute Swan: Mason City (1)
Ross' Goose: DeSoto (4), Shenandoah (13), Jamacia (9)
Brant: DeSoto (1)
Oldsquaw: Davenport (1)
Barrow's Goldeneye: DeSoto (1)
Ruddy Duck: Davenport (1), Oakville (1)
Turkey Vulture: Burlington (2)
Northern Goshawk: Davenport (1)
Golden Eagle: Burlington (1)
Prairie Falcon: Oakville (1, in Illinois)
Ruffed Grouse: Yellow River (2), Decorah (4)
Sandhill Crane: Spirit L. (2), Saylorville (1)
Bonaparte's Gull: Davenport (1, in Illinois)
Thayer's Gull: Keokuk (1)
Glaucous Gull: Princeton (1), Davenport (4), Muscatine (1)
Great Black-backed Gull: Davenport (1)
Barn Owl: Oakville (1, in Illinois), Lost Nation (1)
Snowy Owl: Burlington (1, in Illinois), Spirit L. (1)
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Cedar Rapids (1)
Gray-cheeked Thrush: Davenport (1, in Illinois)
Hermit Thrush: Cedar Rapids (1)
Varied Thrush: Des Moines (1)
Gray Catbird: Burlington (1), Iowa City (1)
Northern Mockingbird: Burlington (1)
Vesper Sparrow: Keokuk (1, in Missouri)
Lincoln's Sparrow: Saylorville (4)
Eastern Meadowlark: Princeton (1), Muscatine (1)
Western Meadowlark: Oakville (1, in Illinois)
Yellow-headed Blackbird: Shenandoah (2)
Brewer's Blackbird: Davenport (2)
Red Crossbill: Davenport (1), Sioux City (1)
White-winged Crossbill: Davenport (3)
Common Redpoll: Rathbun (2), Red Rock (3)
Evening Grosbeak: Boone Co. (1), Lucas (3)
Merganser sp.: Dubuque (1)
Hawk sp.: Swaledale (1)
Large falcon: Tristate (1), Westfield (1)
Gull sp.: Cedar Rapids (2)

near Minneapolis. At some point I believe the Records Committee will decide that these birds constitute a wild population. Until then Trumpeter Swan will not be included in count total; however, continue to report and document them.

Other excellent finds were an immature Sandhill Crane at Saylorville, wintering comfortably at the facility of a knowledgeable waterfowl farmer, providing only the second Iowa Christmas Bird Count record. Also a second record was a Great Black-backed Gull at Davenport. It is tempting (but probably foolhardy) to play devil's advocate on this record, as the documentation

did not consider the possibility of Slaty-backed Gull, one of which was making its way up the Mississippi River in February. Did it take the same route southward? A third Christmas Bird Count record was an American White Pelican, apparently uninjured, found at Burlington.

Three species considered only five years ago to be great rarities now seem to occur rather regularly, having been found in most of the last five years. These are Thayer's Gull, Varied Thrush, and House Finch.

At the bottom of Table 3 are birds that were not identified to species but added to the count total for the locations listed.

REJECTIONS AND OTHER PROBLEMS

The three species groups that need identification notes in order to be listed by species (accipiters, shrikes, meadowlarks) were handled well by most compilers. I feel that it is important that observers carefully identify these birds, and I believe most observers have improved their skills by concentrating more on positive identification of these difficult groups. For accipiters, I consider the following combination of features (not just one) adequate for identification: size, judged by comparison with other nearby species, or seen closely enough not to be fooled by distance effects; prominence of the head, which extends significantly forward of the leading edge of the wings in Cooper's, but appears pulled in, or only extends forward to about even with the leading edge of the wings in Sharp-shinned Hawk and Goshawk; and tail shape, which is usually squared or even notched in Sharp-shinned Hawk and rounded with a prominent white distal band in Cooper's Hawk. Other characters are well-described in the new raptor field guides. In winter, meadowlarks are virtually impossible to identify conclusively by plumage characters alone. This year two were identified acceptably by call or song at Princeton and Muscatine.

Three species were deleted from the count list. One Broad-winged Hawk was reported without documentation, and a Ferruginous Hawk was deleted as the compiler expressed doubts and no details were provided. The status of Trumpeter Swan is discussed above. There were other deletions that affected species totals for some counts, but the species involved were documented acceptably from other locations. In this group were Bonaparte's Gull (no mention of Black-legged Kittiwake or elimination of latter; both are about as likely in late December in Iowa); Brewer's Blackbird (deleted as the compiler expressed doubts about identification and details were not submitted); and Turkey Vulture (despite being observed overhead for "2-3 minutes", identifying features such as the two-toned underwings and flight characteristics were not mentioned).

Finally, a note about the Brant and Barrow's Goldeneye at DeSoto N.W.R.. These were not deleted because they were seen and documented acceptably by many observers who saw these birds after the DeSoto N.W.R. count. I feel that deleting these species because no one on the DeSoto N.W.R. Christmas Bird Count adequately documented them would be pointless, as they were obviously there and correctly identified. A similar situation arose last year with a Varied Thrush at a Des Moines feeder.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

* = feeder observer only.

Alleman: Dean Mosman (compiler), Diane Mosman, Mike Mosman.

Amana: Randy Graesser, Lanny Haldy (compiler), Catherine Oehl, Dan Ray, Marcia Schutlerle.

Ames: Bill Abbott*, Bart Ballard, Barb Bettis, George Brown, Grif Buck*, Ruby Buck*, Cele Burnett, Barnett Cook, Cary Crandall, Wayne Davis, Phil Delphey, Jim Dinsmore*, Steve Dinsmore (compiler), Jean Dow*, Sherry Dragula, Tom Edstrom, Dave Edwards, Jeanne Edwards, Andy Fix, Fritz Franzen, Steve Gabrey, Barb Heikens, Diane Hellwig, Paul Hertz, Tony Hertz, Stewart Huntington, David Johnson, Mary Jo Johnson, Marjorie Lebo*, Ray Lebo*, Paul Martsching, John Mayfield, Mike McGinley, Diane Mumm, Bruce Munson, Kay Niyo, Dave Oesper*, Joyce Ramsey*, John Richard, Judy Shearer, Michael Sondall*, Pat Trumbell, Mark Widrechner, Martha Williams, Hank Zaletel, Gary Zenitsky.

Boone Co.: Mark Ankeny, Jon Bahrenfus, Joyce Bahrenfus, Barb Bettis, Burdene Borich*, Joe Borich*, Ed Carbrey, Liz Carbrey, Barney Cook, Steve Dinsmore, Sherry Dragula, David Edwards, Jeanne Edwards, Bruce Ehresman, Ellen Fairchild, Fritz Franzen, Ken Frazier, Gwen Gibson*, Darrell Hanel, Jane Hanel, Arnie Harris*, Marie Harris*, Rex Heer*, Paul Hertz, Cindy Hildebrand, Annie Krumhardt*, Barb Krumhardt*, Kristen Krumhardt*, Peter Krumhardt*, Nancy Kurrle, Rose McClain*, Michael McGinley, Mary McLean*, Michael Meetz, Diane Mumm, Bruce Munson, Erik Munson, Jim Murdock, Betty Lou Myers*, Kay Niyo, Paul Ovrom, John Richard, Lillian Ross*, Judy Shearer, Alice Stevens*, Genevieve Van Horn*, Mark Widrechner (compiler), Hank Zaletel.

Bremer Co.: Antoinette Camarata, Dave Conrads, Al Goettsch, Betty Goettsch, Kristen Hasalroad, Francis Moore (compiler), Tim Nelson, Dean Rigdon, Andy Stone, Larry Stone, Opal Uher.

Burlington: Michael Baum, Tom Francis*, Chuck Fuller (compiler), James Fuller, Jane Fuller, Harriet Holsteen*, Ralph Kaufman, Sharon Kaufman, Barb Kinneer, Anna Mae Lowther*, John McCormick*, Lynn McKeown, Jerry Rigdon, Lois Rigdon*, Nancy Shively, Phil Shively.

Cedar Falls: Betty Goettsch, Matt Hobson, Francis Moore (compiler), Opal Uher, Rita Wagner, Lorraine Wellnitz.

Cedar Rapids: Phyllis Barber, Neil Bernstein, Robert Blahník*, Diane Bradbury, Robert Bradley, Duane Carr, Keith Carris, Pam Crosby*, Susan Crouch*, Gordon Emmons*, William Galbraith, Edith Glidden*, Karl Goellner, LaVerne Grey*, Harlow Hadow, Irene Haerther, Dave Heinkel, Art Heusinkveld*, Mary Hummel, Eldon Johnson*, Jean Kinsey*, Bernie Knight, Cal Knight, Paul Koza*, Beryl Layton, Patricia Layton, Harris McKee, Mary McKee, Jim Messina, Weir Nelson, Linda O'Hearn, Patrick O'Hearn, Roberta Oppedahl, George Pederson*, Gene Seehusen*, Nancy Slife, Thomas Stark*, Don Stoecker*, Steve Van Note, A. Vasquez*, Rose Vasquez*, Gayle Wallace, F. Weloon*, Peter Wickham (compiler), Aldrich Zobac, Gladys Zobac.

Cherokee: Bertie Beals*, Joe Beals*, Karl Beals, Sandi Beals, Dick Bierman (compiler), Don Bierman*, Judy Bierman*, Ruth Bierman*, Vernon Bierman, Joeva Conard*, Ruby Gilchrist*, Bill Grawburg*, Melba Grawburg*, Irwin Heusinkveld, Jim Huber, Duane Kent, Randy Kirchner, Shirley Kirchner, Randy Mitchell, Joe Sins*, John Strack.

Clinton: Ann Barker, Brian Blevins, Corey Blevins, Lewis Blevins, Jackie Gardner, Gary Inhelder, Kelly McKay, George Naylor, Mary Lou Petersen, Peter Petersen (compiler), Dorothy Turnauckas, John Turnauckas.

Davenport: Ann Barker, Bob Becker*, Wayne Blackwell*, Brian Blevins, Corey Blevins, Lewis Blevins, Tim Brush, Dorothy Crass*, Robert Dau*, Dale Dickinson, Lewis Doty*, Ron Duclos*, Gloria Edgar*, Marilyn Ellis*, Richard Farrar*, Dawn Fisher, Larry Fisher, Melvia Ford*, Ralph Gale*, Mary Hawkinson, Leland Johnson*, Betty Kulas*, Bill LaFrenz, Betty Mast, Kelly McKay, Gladys Meyer*, Don Moeller, Jean Moeller, Nancy Mulford*, Doris Nesseler*, Ken Olson, Robert Olson*, Mary Lou Petersen, Peter Petersen (compiler), Jan Peterson*, Harold Ray*, Chris Reed, Shirley Rocky*, Carol Rogers*, Doris Sandvick*, Judy Schardien*, Joe Schorpp*, Forest Smith*, Marilyn Steenburgh*, Linda Sutherland, Leonard Swanson, Mrs. Leonard Swanson, Ed Timper, Walter Zuurdeeg.

DeSoto NWR: Betty Allen, Colleen Babcock, Jack Brownrigg, Ron Cisar, K. L. Drews (compiler), Amy Galperin, Rollin Gentes, Sue Gentes, James Glathar, Alan Grenon, Carr Heaney, Kris Hoffman, Jerry Jorgenson, Joel Jorgenson, Raymond C. Korpi, Jim Kovanda, Sandy Kovanda, Pat Miller, Jennifer Nass, Donna Peschio, Mike Polly, Neal Ratzlaff, Kathleen Reed, B. J. Rose, Douglas Rose, Roger Rose, Bob Starr, David Starr, Betty Stuhr, Jerry Toll, Eric Volden, Al Werthman, Ione Werthman, Bruce Wetteroth, Barbara Wilson.

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Dubuque: Jan Crawford, Stan Crawford, Adele Feller, John Feller, Harry Harold, Howard Higley, Joan Higley, Tom Jirsa, Brian Larson, Sharon Means, John Miller (compiler), Leta Miller, Reinhold Nelisson, Leslie Neyens, Steve Neyens, Mike Ouversen, Jim Ryan, Sally Ryan, Bob Walton, Sandy Walton, Bob Wiederaenders, Nita Wiederaenders, Charlie Winterwood.

Eldora: Laura Channell*, Winifred Crosley*, Mark Proescholdt, Garnita Seward, Ramona Sommerlot (compiler).

Glennwood [new count, center of circle 2.75 miles north and 1.75 miles west from junction of J10 and IA 275 in Tabor]: Howard Curry, Jenney Curry, Bill Gates, Ione Getscher, June Parks, B. J. Rose, Douglas L. Rose (compiler), Roger Rose, Ross Silcock.

Iowa City: Carl Bendorf, Kim Cook, Karen Disbrow, Bud Gode, Randy Grasser, Lanny Haldy, Jim Hays, Nancy Hindes, Rick Hollis (compiler), Bernie Hoyer, James Huntington, Bill Kent, Tom Kent, Nancy Lynch, Richard Lynch, John Marks, John McClure, Ramona McGurk, Mary Noble, Cathy Oehl, Bill Reha, Gloria Reha, Jim Sandrock, Tom Shires, Kathy Soska, Joanne Staton, Mike Staton, D. Stewart, Dick Tetrault, Carol Thompson, Bob Towner*.

Jamaica: Eloise Armstrong, Eugene Armstrong, Ray Cummins (compiler), Steve Dinsmore, John Hoogerheide, Betty Jones, Bob Myers, Denny Thompson.

Keokuk: Bart Ballard, Barbara Breheny*, John Cecil, Robert Cecil (compiler), Duff Decker, Orpha Decker, Steve Dinsmore, Marty Fox, Chuck Fuller, Jane Fuller, Loraine Grigsby, Betty Hermansfeld*, Francis Moore, Diane Porter, Michael Porter, Zelma Williams.

Lamoni: Charlotte Carter*, Jackie Flowers, J. Donald Gillaspay (compiler), Jim Gillaspay, Dan Long.

Lost Nation: Brian Blevins, Karen Brix, Bob Bryant, Jess Fields, Lisa Hodge, Sharon Kaufman, Peter Petersen, Chris Reed, Bryce Richardson (compiler), Jeannette Ruprecht, Charlie Wentworth, June Wentworth, Walt Wickham.

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Ottumwa: Charles Ayers, Darlene Ayers, Dot Cornett, Ray Cummins, Nelson Hoskins (compiler), Don Johnson, Elaine Johnson, Steve Johnson, Tom Johnson, Mary Montgomery, Diane Porter.

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Sac County: Mary Becker, Kirk Brown, Carlotta Buse, Judy Carlson, Rita DeWall, Ross DeWall, Clem Efta, Rita Efta (compiler), Joe Halbur, Ron Harms, Elizabeth Hill*, Linda Hirschberg, Irene Lammers*, Joe Schweers, Margaret Seck (compiler), Virginia Tharnish*, Todd VanEwegan, Jim Wallace, Eva Wiedemeyer, Betty Yunek.

Saylorville [new count, center of circle 3 miles northwest of Polk City on IA 415]: Pam Allen, Reid Allen, Evlyn Anderson, Eloise Armstrong, Eugene Armstrong, Bart Ballard, Bob Cecil, John Cecil, Jane Clark, Barney Cook, Dave DeGeus, Jim Dinsmore, Steve Dinsmore (compiler), Dave Edwards, Bery Engebretsen, Andy Fix, Fritz Franzen, Steve Gabrey, Sue Hockmuth, John Hoogerheide, Maggie Hoogerheide, Larry Igl, Bonnie McCrady, Grace McLaughlin, Jim Murdock, Bob Myers, Kay Niyo, Scott Patton, Markt Proescholdt, John Richard, Tom Rosberg, Judy Shearer, Ross Silcock, Dennis Thompson, Dan Varland, Vernon Windsor, Gary Zenitsky.

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Spirit Lake: LaVonne Foote*, Doug Harr (compiler), Arlene Kuehl, Dave Kuehl, Jan Ortmeier, Nancy Schoene, Lee Schoenewe, Loraine Wallace, Lynn Wallace, Mavis Wunder.

Swaledale: Melicent Ames, Marjorie Fessler*, John Gaffney, Lucille Gaffney (compiler), Corrine Hitzhusen*, Ernest Hitzhusen*, Bonnie Younge*.

Tristate: Tanya Bray, Ione Getscher, Doug Rose, Ross Silcock (compiler).

Westfield: Carol Farmer, Larry K. Farmer (compiler), Todd Oetken, Jerry Probst, Theresia Schiefen.

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FIELD REPORTS—WINTER 1988-1989

W. ROSS SILCOCK

WEATHER

The winter period was remarkably mild, with January an unbelievable 10 degrees or more above average. Reality struck early in February, however, when many birds, most obviously waterfowl, finally decided to leave the state. Major reservoirs froze over for the first time during February, and the weather stayed wintry for the remainder of the month with very little noticeable influx of early migrants noted in late February.



GENERAL TRENDS

Because of the mild conditions in December and January, many species were present in larger numbers than usual, although some, strangely, were reduced in numbers. Examples of species occurring in unusually high numbers were swans, geese, Red-breasted Merganser, and Ring-billed Gull. These species usually winter a little south of Iowa, but many remained in Iowa this year. The large numbers of wintering waterfowl no doubt attracted rarer species such as Trumpeter Swan, Brant, and Barrow's Goldeneye. Noticeable were large numbers of raptors, including more than the usual reports of Merlin, and a Prairie Falcon in eastern Iowa. Noticeable for their absence were winter finches. Most obvious was the lack of Pine Siskins, especially in contrast to their abundance the past two years. House Finch appears to be well on its way to being not only regular, but abundant, especially in eastern and central Iowa.

UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

Several outstanding rarities were documented. Reports of accidental species will be confirmed by the Records Committee. Most spectacular was what would be Iowa's first (second for the Lower 48 States) record of Slaty-backed Gull, a bird seen by many in the Quad Cities area. Others were Brant, Barrow's Goldeneye, Great Black-backed Gull, and Thayer's Gull. The latter appears on the verge of becoming casual or regular as a winter visitor in Iowa. Five Casual species were reported: Black Scoter, Surf Scoter, Ferruginous Hawk, Black-legged Kittiwake, and House Finch (last chance to get an easy casual!). Other rare winter birds included Franklin's Gull, Horned Grebe, Dunlin, American White Pelican, Oldsquaw, Sandhill Crane, and Common Barn-Owl. Trumpeter Swan, currently listed as extirpated in Iowa, continues to be found in winter.

SPECIES DATA

* = documented record; CBC = Christmas Bird Count 1988 (in this issue); record early/late dates are given in []. Christmas Bird Count data are not included, except where useful in analysis of trends or discussion of rarer species.

Common Loon: The last were 1 at Saylorville Res. on 7 Dec (SD) (3 were there on 4 Dec) and 2 at Burlington on 4 Dec (CF).

Pied-billed Grebe: The last were 1 at Saylorville Res. on 26 Dec (BE, SD) and 2 at Cedar L. in Cedar Rapids on 30 Dec (JF).

Horned Grebe: The last was at Saylorville Res. on 9 Dec (SD).

American White Pelican: 2 lingered this year: 1 "apparently healthy" at Burlington from 11 to 24 Dec (CF) and 1 near LaPorte City from late December to early February (Beth Brown fide SD). Presumably the early February cold snap caused the later to leave.

Double-crested Cormorant: A few individuals apparently wintered, including up to 3 in the Davenport area until at least 19 Feb (TEB, SD, PCP). Late birds were at Saylorville Res. until 15 Dec (SD).

Great Blue Heron: Much in evidence, at least in early winter, the last seen (live!) was at Saylorville Res. on 30 Dec (AJ), although a freshly dead bird was found there on 9 Jan (SD).

Tundra Swan: Swans in general were much in evidence this winter, with most reports well-documented. An immature Tundra remained below Red Rock dam from 3 Dec to 15 Jan (*AJ, *SD). Four swans reported as Tundras without details on the Mississippi R. 8 miles n. of Burlington (CF) may have been part of the group of 7 Tundras (5 adults and 2 immatures) seen 30 miles south near Montrose on 30 Dec (*SD). Up to 10 Tundras accompanied an immature Trumpeter in the Princeton-LeClaire vicinity from 2 to 24 Feb (PCP, *AJ).

Trumpeter Swan: At least 13 different Trumpeters appeared, many identified simply by various neck collars and wing tags as derived from the breeding population established artificially in Minnesota. In this category was a pair with collars numbered 54 and 57 at Charles City on 4-5 Feb (August Geberding fide MJH), and rather amazingly a different pair in the same place with wing tags numbered 22 and 74 on 26 Feb (*JLW). The photo submitted with the latter report shows neither bird has a neck collar. Two birds were at Easter L. in Des Moines on 9 Dec, both with wing tags, one numbered 39 (MT). A group of one adult with a neck collar and 4 immatures showed up on 1 Feb at Keomah S.P. in Mahaska County (MPR). A single wing-tagged bird was on Cedar L. on 25 Dec (Bart Ballard fide SD). The immature near Princeton-LeClaire was photographed (*PCP, *DCP). At some point it seems that these birds will be considered part of an established breeding population, and thus part of the Iowa avifauna as migrants and winter visitors.



Trumpeter Swans (above), Charles City, 26 Feb 1989. Photo by Jan and Jim Walter.



Two Tundra Swans (left) and Trumpeter Swan (right), LeClaire, 10 Jan 1989. Photo by Don Moeller.

- Mute Swan:** The only positively-identified Mute Swan was an adult at Mason City from 17 Dec through the period (*JLW).
- Swan sp.:** Other than the 4 birds n. of Burlington reported as Tundras and perhaps best considered here, other reports not clearly assignable to species included 1 at West Okoboji L. from 10 to 27 Dec, reported as a Tundra without details (ET). One flying over the Iowa State University campus on 14 Feb was described without details as "not a Mute Swan" (Larry Hood fide JJD). Finally, 1 at Casey-Barrow Landing n. of Burlington on 20 Jan was reported as a Mute without details (CF).
- Greater White-fronted Goose:** Unusual in winter and rather far east were 4 at Keokuk on 21 Jan (Brian Warren fide SD). Another was at DeSoto N.W.R. on 23 Dec (THK).
- Snow Goose:** In SW Iowa, this species usually lingers in varying numbers into January, but probably unprecedented were the 153,000 at DeSoto N.W.R. as late as 10 Jan (TEB). These birds departed with the early February cold snap (BLW), presumably as did the 2,500 at L. Manawa seen on 31 Jan (BP). Small flocks appeared at various E Iowa locations, such as 29 at Red Rock Res. on 18 Dec (AJ) and 16 at Rathbun Res. 12 Jan (SD). Up to 55 were at Saylorville Res. as late as 29 Jan, but all departed during February (BE), apparently not as hardy (or as pampered?) as the group (up to 16) that wintered at a waterfowl breeder's pond in Polk County (SD).
- Ross' Goose:** As expected, patient observers were able to pick out up to 12 Ross' from the huge number of Snows at DeSoto N.W.R. through 6 Jan (MT, AJ, DD)[2nd latest]. There were 3 with about 900 Snows at Bays Branch on 28 Dec (SD).
- Brant:** One of this winter's highlights was a single Brant of the eastern race at DeSoto N.W.R. from 19 Dec to 3 Jan (*MR, *SD, *RKM, *JF, *THK, *TEB, *RIC, *WRS). This bird associated with the Snows.
- Canada Goose:** This species attempts to winter wherever conditions allow, often in large numbers, such as the 3,100 at Saylorville Res. on 12 Jan (SD) and 2,000 at Bays Branch on 28 Dec (SD). Cold weather causes movement of these birds, with numbers reduced to 1,050 by 4 Feb at Saylorville Res. (SD); however, 3,000 remained in Clay and Palo Alto counties on 12 Feb (Marty Eby fide SD).
- Wood Duck:** Small numbers wintered statewide, usually with Mallards: 5 at Rock Valley (JV), 1 in Polk County (SD), and 1 at Mason City (JLW).
- Green-winged Teal:** A few lasted until the February cold snap, including 12 at the IPL Ponds in Pottawattamie County on 31 Jan (BP) and 8 at Saylorville Res. on 29 Jan (SD). The latest were 2 at Saylorville Res. on 4 Feb (SD).
- American Black Duck:** Good numbers remained through early February, including 46 at Saylorville Res. on 17 Jan, declining to a still-good-sized flock of 16 on 4 Feb (SD), and 2 at IPL Ponds on 28 Jan (BLW). The first returning birds were 4 at Red Rock Res. on 22 Feb (AJ).
- Mallard:** The effect of the early February cold snap was obvious on the flock at Saylorville Res., where the peak of 25,000 on 21 Jan (BE) declined rapidly to only 820 on 5 Feb (SD). Two different Mallard hybrids were reported: 3 Black Duck/Mallard at Saylorville Res. (SD) and a male-like Pintail with some green feathers on the head and a rump like a Mallard (SD).
- Northern Pintail:** Small numbers are usually found with Mallard flocks in winter. This year's high count was 11 at Saylorville Res. prior to 4 Feb when most with the Mallards (SD).
- Northern Shoveler:** Rare at best as a wintering bird in Iowa, one did winter at the breeder's pond in Polk County (SD), and unusually late and a notably high number were 18-22 birds at DeSoto N.W.R. from 2 to 10 Jan (SD, TEB). There were no other January or February reports.
- Gadwall:** Only 3 were reported to be wintering: 1 male with the Mallards at Rock Valley (JV) and 2 in the LeClaire area (PCP). The high count was of 22 at Red Rock Res. on 6 Jan (SD). Birds remained at Red Rock Res. to 21 Jan (AJ) and at Saylorville Res. until 5 Feb (SD). Returning migrants included 4 at Lock & Dam 14 on 24 Feb (DCP) and 6 at IPL Ponds (BLW) and 2 at Saylorville Res. (SD) on 25 Feb.
- American Wigeon:** In the same category as Shoveler as a rare bird in midwinter, wigeon lingered as late as 1 Feb at Red Rock Res. (MP) and 15 Feb at Saylorville Res. (SD). Eight were at Saylorville Res. as late as 5 Feb (SD).
- Canvasback:** Bob Cecil reports that the large numbers at Keokuk the past two years did not remain this year, leaving well before the river iced over. Small numbers were found through February on the Mississippi R. in S Iowa, presumably wintering. The highest count was 9 at Davenport on 16 Feb (SD).
- Redhead:** Not a particularly hardy species, most Redheads left in December, the only January report was of 2 at DeSoto N.W.R. on 3 Jan (SD). One at Bettendorf on 12 Feb (PCP) may have wintered. Up to 6 early returnees were at Saylorville Res. 25 Feb (AJ, SD).

Ring-necked Duck: Several stayed well into January in W Iowa, with 3 at IPL Ponds on 31 Jan (BPa, LPa) and up to 17 at DeSoto N.W.R. on 3 Jan (SD). Five were still at DeSoto N.W.R. on 8 Jan (BPa, LPa). One on the Mississippi R. in Scott Co. on 18 Feb (AJ) may have been wintering.

Greater Scaup: Away from the "coasts", the only reports were of 1 at Saylorville Res. as late as 5 Feb and a peak of 5 there on 4 Dec (SD). There were at least 4 n. of Montrose as late as 28 Jan (CF), and on the west side of the state up to 3 were at DeSoto N.W.R. on 2-3 Jan (TEB, SD). Returning were 2 at IPL Ponds on 25 Feb (BLW).

Lesser Scaup: Individuals lingered well into January on the major reservoirs, notably 23 at Saylorville Res. on 21 Jan, with 11 as late as 5 Feb (SD). Nine were still at Red Rock Res. on 6 Jan (SD). Possibly wintering were 8 at Keokuk on 9 Feb (RCe). The first returnees were 2 at Red Rock Res. on 22 Feb (AJ).

Oldsquaw: This was a good winter for this species, with at least 6 individuals reported. Most cooperative were at least 3 (1 imm. male, 2 females) at Saylorville Res. from 3 Dec to 4 Feb (SD). Two were at Red Rock Res. on 3 Dec (JF). There were 5 sightings of singles on the Mississippi R. in the Davenport area in the period 18 Dec to 8 Jan, possibly the same bird, as only two of the reports specified age or sex, both describing females (PCP, BBI).

Black Scoter: An undocumented report was received.

Surf Scoter: 1 was with 3 White-winged Scoters at West Okoboji on 3-5 Dec (*ET)[2nd latest].

White-winged Scoter: Apart from the West Okoboji report (above), a male was reported without date from Burlington (CF). A late report is of a female shot at Barringer's Sl. in Clay Co. on 2 Nov (David Dunn fide JJD).

Common Goldeneye: Aside from the expected wintering birds along the "coasts", peak count "inland" was 660 at Saylorville Res. on 7 Dec, declining to 44 on 5 Feb (SD), when all departed.

Barrow's Goldeneye: A male at DeSoto N.W.R. from 2 to 8 Jan was well-documented (*WRS, *TEB, *SD, *JF). Interestingly, photos submitted by Loren Padelford show a probable female also, which would confirm the initial report of a pair (Ruth Green fide TEB). This is only the second record for Iowa.

Bufflehead: This species and Redhead are the least expected of the regular diving ducks in midwinter, and there was indeed only one report as late as Jan-2 at Bettendorf on 1 Jan (THK).

Hooded Merganser: Expected in small numbers as a wintering species, a female lingered at Saylorville Res. as late as 13 Jan (SD), and up to 4 were at DeSoto N.W.R. as late as 8 Jan (JF, BPa, LPa). Scattered individuals and pairs were reported during January and February along the Mississippi R. (m.ob.), probably no more than 5-6 birds. A male returned to IPL Ponds on 25 Feb (BLW).

Common Merganser: At Saylorville Res., Iowa's most common wintering duck except for Mallard had peak monthly numbers of 6,100 on 7 Dec and 1,255 on 28 Jan 28; only 15 were there on 5 Feb (SD). No reports of wintering numbers were received from the "coasts".

Red-breasted Merganser: Rarely reported after mid-December in Iowa, this year was no exception. Latest were 2-6 birds at Red Rock Res. on 13-18 Dec (AJ), but 250 were recorded on the Clinton CBC as late as 26 Dec, a rather surprising (and also undocumented) record.

Ruddy Duck: None were reported, perhaps not surprisingly after only 2 were found on the CBC. Overlooked in last year's report was 1 at Keokuk on 25 Feb (RCe)[record earliest].

Bald Eagle: This species is now one of the most common and conspicuous winter raptors in Iowa, particularly near major river systems, reservoirs, and waterfowl concentration points. Peak counts were 102 in Marion Co. on 28 Jan (Judy Shearer fide SD), 79 along the Des Moines R. in Marion and Mahaska counties on 29 Jan (AJ), and 60 at L. Manawa on 8 Jan (BPa, LPa). Petersen observed that they were spread out this year without any noticeable concentrations along the Mississippi R.

Northern Harrier: The expected few wintering birds were reported, mostly from C and S Iowa.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: Individuals were reported as expected statewide, although numbers did not seem out of the ordinary. Many reports lacked details of identification.

Cooper's Hawk: There were several reports (some without details) of both adults and immatures, but only one observer (JSi) indicated unusual numbers, in this case "more common than usual" in SC Iowa.

Northern Goshawk: In addition to the single CBC bird, only 2 were reported, different birds from almost the same place on 1 Jan: an imm. or female at Big Creek S.P. (SD), and an adult at the west end of the Saylorville Res. bridge at Polk City (EIA-details). This low number of reports is in contrast to the many reported in the previous few winters.

- Red-shouldered Hawk:** 1 was seen by many near Sandpiper Beach at Saylorville Res. through the period (SD). None were reported outside the usual range in E Iowa and along major river systems in C Iowa.
- Red-tailed Hawk:** The high count was 28 on 2 Jan at Red Rock Res. (AJ). Two Harlan's were reported, 1 near Booneville during Jan and early Feb (EIA) and 1 on 3 Dec at Red Rock Res. (JF). Neither report adequately eliminated other melanistic possibilities, but both were seen by experienced observers. It would be of interest to record plumage details of these birds.
- Ferruginous Hawk:** 3 reports were received. One had no documentation; the others will be reviewed by the Records Committee.
- Rough-legged Hawk:** Three observers (AJ, JSi, BE) indicated scarcity of this species in C and SC Iowa this winter.
- Golden Eagle:** See CBC.
- American Kestrel:** Kestrels were common statewide, as exemplified by "goodly numbers" in Sioux Co. during December and January (JV). Perhaps they were able to survive by eating House Sparrows as did one in a Mason City yard (JLW). Some birds relocated during colder February weather (BE).
- Merlin:** This was a good Merlin year. Apart from an amazing 7 birds on CBCs, three more reports were received, making a winter total of 10 birds. One was at Sioux Center in Jan (*JV), 1 was in a Glenwood yard on 13 Jan (DoR), and 1 was near Polk City on 18 Feb (BE). Most years only 1-3 records of this primarily western falcon are received. In Iowa it is a rare but regular winter visitor.
- Prairie Falcon:** Along with Merlin, this species was reported more than usual. One was found on the CBC, and as many as 6 more were reported during the winter. Most approachable was 1 that roosted in a silo e. of Reinbeck and became a "stakeout" from 17 to 27 Feb (*BPr, *JF). Only about 15 miles distant, and possibly the same bird, was another at Liscomb on 15 Feb (*MPr). One was far to the east in Davenport at Utah Avenue on 12 Jan (*PCP), and another was in Sioux City, a more expected location, on 5 Jan (*JV). The other two sightings may be of the same bird: 6 miles s. of Luther on 8 Jan (SD) and 5-10 miles away at Ledges S.P. on 23 Feb (SD).
- Gray Partridge:** This species continues to move southward in Iowa, most noticeably in the southeast, where a probable first county record was made for Warren Co. with 5 on 31 Dec (JSi). During February, 2-4 were seen near Fairfield (DCP). The species is apparently established in bottomlands just north of Burlington, where 5 were seen on 12 Feb (CF).
- Ring-necked Pheasant:** High count was of 71 near Big Creek S.P. on 9 Feb (BE).
- Wild Turkey:** That this species is established statewide is indicated by the paucity of reports; it is no longer big news. High count was 21 on 5 Feb near Patterson in Madison Co. (EIA).
- Northern Bobwhite:** A report from N Iowa, where the species is least common in Iowa, was of resident birds in NE Cerro Gordo Co. (JLW).
- American Coot:** A few wintered in the Davenport area, where up to 3 were seen on 2 Jan, 2 Feb, and 19 Feb (PCP, WRS), but a more unusual wintering record was of 1 with the wintering Mallard flock at Rock Valley (JV).
- Sandhill Crane:** Rather surprisingly, reports were received of up to 8 birds from three locations this winter. Wintering was an immature at the famous waterfowl farm in Polk Co., seen by many (both the bird and the farm) from 10 Dec to 18 Feb (*SD). Also wintering were 3 n. of Burlington, seen on 11 Dec and 11 Feb and believed to be the same birds (CF). Late migrants were 2 near Spirit L. from 12 to 28 Dec (*ET, DCH). Unconfirmed reports suggested that up to 4 birds were at this location (DCH).
- Killdeer:** Wintering birds are rare, and so a good record was a single wintering near Burlington, seen 8-14 Jan (CF). However, 2 were at Saylorville Res. as late as 5 Jan (SD). As many as 23 were at Saylorville Res. through 23 Dec (SD), a high total that late in fall. Probably an early migrant was 1 at Hendrickson M. on 25 Feb (EIA).
- Dunlin:** 3 at Saylorville Res. survived several nights of single degree temperatures (Dumlin?) and remained until 9 Dec (*SD)[record latest]. The previous late date was 2 Dec for this late migrant.
- Common Snipe:** 1 was at Slater as late as 13 Jan (SD), while a more likely wintering location near Burlington hosted 2 birds into Jan (CF).
- Franklin's Gull:** 1 breeding plumaged bird was at Saylorville Res. on 25 Dec and 9 Jan, and 2 were there from 21 Jan to 2 Feb (*SD)[3rd winter record]. These appeared to be different birds from the adult and immature seen there from 3 to 7 Dec (SD). An adult was at Red Rock Res. from 3 to 11 Dec (JF, SD)[2nd latest].
- Bonaparte's Gull:** Like Franklin's Gull, this is not a hardy species. The latest report for Bonaparte's was a relatively early (for this winter) 13 Dec at Red Rock Res. (AJ).

Ring-billed Gull: Numbers declined rapidly through December, as is normal, exemplified by the 23,000 at Saylorville Res. on 3-4 Dec, but only 293 on 23 Dec (SD). January numbers at Saylorville Res. fluctuated, peaking at 103 on 28 Jan, with 81 still there on 2 Feb (SD), when most presumably departed. During early to mid-Feb most Ring-billeds leave Iowa, but 16 were at Keokuk on 9 Feb (RCe). Up to 6 were at Red Rock Res. in mid-Jan (AJ, SD), when they are usually absent.

Herring Gull: The peak at Saylorville Res. was 2,600 on 7 Dec, declining to 119 on 2 Feb, and only 1 on 4 Feb (SD). There were still large numbers in the Davenport area in early to mid-Feb, usually the low point for winter numbers, with 315 counted on 16 Feb (SD).

Thayer's Gull: Reports of this species continue apace, as observers sharpen their identification skills. It appears that adults are being overlooked and may occur with some frequency; 1 was at Saylorville Res. on 28 Jan (*AJ), and 2 were there on 30 Dec (*AJ). Another adult was at Red Rock Res. on 13 Dec (*AJ), for a total of 3 adults. Looking for adult Thayer's Gulls must be like looking amongst Snow Geese for Ross' Geese. Immatures were at Saylorville Res. from 3 to 30 Dec (with a peak count of 3 on 4 Dec) (*SD), at Red Rock Res. on 11 Dec (*SD), and at Davenport on 2 Jan (*PCP) and 18 Feb (*PCP, *AJ), for a total of 5 immatures. Documentations of this species are still being reviewed by the Records Committee.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: There was only one report of this rare bird in Iowa, an adult at Saylorville Res. on 4 Dec (*SD). This species is still accidental in Iowa, but may soon be reclassified as casual or even regular (but still rare!).

Slaty-backed Gull: Records Committee confirmation would establish the first Iowa record and only the second for the Lower 48 States for this species. One was in the Quad Cities area from 12 to 21 Feb (*AB, *JF, *PCP, *THK, *GW, *TEB, *WRS, *CJB), a winter adult.

Glaucous Gull: The peak was 3 at Saylorville Res. on 3 Dec (SD) and in the Davenport area on 12 Dec (PCP). Many reports were received of first- and second-year birds, all at major reservoirs or river systems in E or C Iowa.

Great Black-backed Gull: Two reports were received of this rare gull in Iowa: an imm. was at Saylorville Res. on 10 Dec (*BE) and an adult at Davenport on 19 Dec (*JF), presumably the same individual found the day before during the Davenport CBC.

Black-legged Kittiwake: An imm. at Red Rock Res. from 6 to 17 Dec (*MPr)[3rd latest] was probably the same bird seen by many during the fall season.



Black-legged Kittiwake, Red Rock Reservoir, 6 and 12 Dec 1988. Photos by Ann Johnson.

Mourning Dove: Few birds are tough enough to winter in N Iowa, so reports of 6 in Kossuth Co. on 31 Jan (MK) and up to 29 through the period in Mason City (JLW) are of interest.

Common Barn-Owl: See CBC.

Great Horned Owl: An individual of the Arctic race was seen on 19 Feb in Kossuth Co. (MK), a reminder that individuals of resident species may not necessarily migrate, but definitely can move around, often over significant distances.

Snowy Owl: This was a down year for Snowy Owls. Only 5 appeared, including one on the CBC. Additional reports were all from the period of 26 Dec to 14 Jan. Singles were near Marshalltown on 26 Dec (EIA), near Conrad on 6 Jan (Blake Rhodes fide SD), near Hartley the second week of Jan (fide JV), and near Walcott on 10-14 Jan (Larry Hoch, Chris Reed fide PCP).

Barred Owl: One in Cerro Gordo Co. during the period was considered unusual there (JLW). An albino was found in the Hardin Co. Greenbelt where it had been seen two years before (MPr).

Long-eared Owl: Wintering birds were found in most parts of the state, with high counts from Polk, Dallas, and Boone counties, where 29 were tallied (SD).

Short-eared Owl: Somewhat fewer winter in Iowa than the preceding species, and mixed roosts are not uncommon. Most (13 birds) were found in Polk and Dallas counties (SD).

Northern Saw-Whet Owl: Boone, Dallas, and Polk counties (the owl capital of Iowa?) yielded no fewer than 23 birds (SD). These locations are where most observers see this species in Iowa.

Belted Kingfisher: Many wintered this year, as open water was abundant. One was as far northwest as Hawarden on 5 Jan (JV), and another was at Mason City on 24 Jan (JLW). These birds do not need much open water to be induced to linger.

Red-headed Woodpecker: This species was common along the Des Moines R. near Saylorville Res., where 22 were found on 12 Feb in a half mile (BE).

Red-bellied Woodpecker: In the northwest reaches of their range, a pair that came to a feeder in Sioux City throughout the period were considered unusual (JV).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: This species is not common in Iowa, especially in midwinter, but singles were at Liscomb on 10-17 Dec (MPR), near Saylorville Res. on 31 Dec and 2 Jan (BE), and at Glendale Cemetery in Des Moines on 25 Feb (EIA).

Pileated Woodpecker: Reports from NC and NW Iowa were of 1 at Algona (MK), and three sightings, probably of the same bird, at Estherville from mid-Dec to mid-Jan (HW).

American Crow: A large roost at Ames contained several thousand birds throughout the period, "the largest I have seen here" (JJD).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: This was a poor year for this species, with predominantly singles reported, most in cemeteries (JF, MPR, CF, PCP), or pine groves in the Saylorville Res. area (BE, MPR).

Brown Creeper: The oaks at Oak Grove S.P. in Sioux Co. provided good wintering habitat, with up to 6 there throughout the period (JV).

Carolina Wren: This winter probably did not hold back the increase in the Iowa population. Farthest north and west were singles wintering at Saylorville Res. (SD, BE) and near Glenwood on 22 Jan (DoR).

Winter Wren: The only January reports were from Crapo P. in Burlington, where 2 wintered (JF, CF), and 1 at a feeder in Clive on 22 Jan (EIA). One probably wintered at Springbrook S.P. where it was seen on 12 Feb (EIA). Iowa is at the northwest edge of the winter range, and January records are unusual.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Wintering numbers appeared normal, although few were found in Sioux Co. (JV). Iowa is well within the winter range.

Eastern Bluebird: Most leave Iowa in winter, but more lingered this year than usual (see CBC); however, there were no mid-winter reports from the northwest two-thirds of the state.

Hermits Thrush: This species is rare in winter in Iowa, so one in Mills Co. on 14 Feb (DoR) is of interest.

American Robin: Wintering birds were reported statewide, even from Sioux Center, where they normally do not winter (JV). One was at a Sioux Center feeder on 5 Jan (JV).

Varied Thrush: This year's only report of this rare but regular species was of the cooperative feeder bird in Des Moines, seen by many from 4 Dec to 20 Feb (EIA).

Gray Catbird: Two reports were received of this rare winter bird. The CBC bird at Burlington apparently wintered, as it was seen again on 1 Jan (CF), and another was in Dallas Co. on 15 Jan (SD).

Northern Mockingbird: The CBC bird was the only one reported, and it apparently wintered, n. of Burlington (JF, CF).

Brown Thrasher: The only report other than the 4 CBC birds was of 1 near Reinbeck on 19 Feb (EIA). Iowa is at the north edge of the winter range.

Bohemian Waxwing: The only report was of 4 at Sioux Center on 14 Dec (JV).

Cedar Waxwing: Winter flocks were only moderate in size, the best count being 50 on 4 Dec at Fairfield (DCP).

Northern Shrike: Individual birds set up territories during the period, and could be relocated consistently, but some movement was noted in the Big Creek S.P. area with at least 4 there in December, but only 2 during Jan-Feb (SD). Southerly records with details were of 2 on 6 Jan at Red Rock Res. (SD), 1 in Marion Co. on 2 Jan (AJ), 1 at Princeton on 13 Feb (AB), and 1 at Princeton M. on 18 Feb (THK). These records indicate southward movement after the CBC period (see CBC).

Loggerhead Shrike: Reports were few, the farthest north at Badger Creek S.P. in Madison Co. (ReA), probably about as far north as to be expected.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 1 was at L. Ahquabi on 31 Dec (JSi). This species winters only rarely.

Rufous-sided Towhee: Of 4 birds reported, 3 were easterns and one a spotted, the latter at Saylorville Res. on 31 Dec (BE). The others were in Dallas County (2) on 11 Feb (Paul Hertzfel fide SD) and at Princeton (AB). It would be interesting to know if each type is found statewide in winter. Please identify these birds to race if you can.

- Fox Sparrow:** One was n. of Burlington on 29 Jan (CF), the only report after the CBC period. This species winters in small numbers in SE Iowa.
- Song Sparrow:** 2 were at Union Slough N.W.R. on 31 Jan (MK), rather far north for wintering birds. While the species may winter anywhere in Iowa, conditions are usually too harsh over most of the northern half of the state.
- Swamp Sparrow:** Rather surprisingly, no reports were received for mid-winter. CBC numbers were good, and it would be interesting to know if these birds wintered.
- White-throated Sparrow:** At the edge of the winter range in EC Iowa, 4 wintered in a Davenport yard (PCP), and another was in a Des Moines yard (ReA, PA). No reports were received from W Iowa, where the species is usually absent in mid-winter.
- White-crowned Sparrow:** Although expected to winter in S Iowa, the only reports were of 1 that stayed from 18 Feb through the period on a Mills Co. farm (BLW) and 2 in the Red Rock Res. area on 18-19 Dec and 2 Jan (AJ).
- Harris' Sparrow:** Recent years have shown that significant numbers winter in the central Des Moines R. valley (see CBC). One was at Jester P. on 21 Jan (ReA, PA, MP). Encouraging were wintering birds on a Mills Co. farm, the first there for 3-4 years (BLW). One in Warren Co. throughout the period was at a feeder (JSi).
- Dark-eyed Junco:** Three reports were received of Oregon juncos: at a Sioux Co. feeder on 11 Jan (JV) and in Des Moines on 14 Jan (SD) and 15 Feb (MP).
- Lapland Longspur:** Numbers were only average, and flocks were generally small and not obvious due to the lack of snow cover. Definitely a large flock, however, was the 2,000 e. of DeSoto N.W.R. on 8 Jan (BP, LPA). Most reports were from S Iowa; perhaps observers there consider the species more unusual.
- Snow Bunting:** The consensus was that fewer than normal were seen where the species most expected, such as 25 in Dickinson County on 6 Jan being "the only flock seen" (DCH), and 25 in Cerro Gordo Co. on 21 Jan the "only ones" (JLW, CN). About 67 were seen on 4 Dec on Sandpiper Beach at Saylorville Res. (SD, BE, EIA, PA), and fair numbers occurred south to Warren Co., where 2 were seen on 10 Dec (AJ), and Red Rock Res., where about 50 were found on 7 Dec (MP).
- Red-winged Blackbird:** The only winter flock reported after a weak CBC showing was the 500 in Boone Co. on 13 Jan (SD). There were no major roosts in the state this year, contrasting with the previous two. Returnees were noted on 25 Feb at Saylorville Res., where 200 headed north (BE).
- Rusty Blackbird:** The last reported were 50 in a mixed blackbird flock in Warren Co. on 30 Dec (AJ).
- Brewer's Blackbird:** The only report other than the 2 CBC birds at Davenport was of 15 in a mixed blackbird flock on 30 Dec 30 in Warren Co. (AJ). This species winters south of Iowa, and wintering birds are rare.
- Common Grackle:** Numbers were generally low, and so the 6 wintering at Sioux Center (JV) were unexpected, as was 1 at Union Slough N.W.R. on 31 Jan (MK). One at a feeder on 26 Dec must have celebrated the holidays to excess, as it was described as having "a crossed beak, a bare patch on shoulder, and no tail" (DCP).
- Brown-headed Cowbird:** Unusually small numbers remained this winter. Wintering birds are confined mainly to the southeast, and so unexpected sightings were of 4 at a feedlot near Union Slough N.W.R. on 14 Feb (MK). A small flock of 16 at Waterworks P. in Des Moines on 26 Feb were probably early migrants (JSi). The mixed flock in Warren Co. must not have been mixed enough for this species!
- Purple Finch:** This was just an average year, with one observer wondering whether "House Finch has replaced Purple Finch" (DCP). At Burlington, Purple Finches increased "dramatically" during the February cold snap (CF). High count was 36 at Glenwood on 16 Feb (DoR), where, incidentally, there are no House Finches.
- House Finch:** See CBC for numerical data. Numbers continue to increase dramatically in E and C Iowa, from Mason City, where up to 16 were counted in a yard through the period (JLW), and south to Fairfield, where a peak count of 30 was at a feeder on 24 Dec (DCP). The highlight was the amazing number "milling around" at Glendale Cemetery, where it was considered a "trash bird" (AJ). Highest count there was an almost incredible 110 birds on 13 Jan (SD). Strangely, no reports were received west of Des Moines, although 3 were at Cherokee on the CBC. Careful documentation of a captured bird at Burlington was provided ("PL").
- Red Crossbill:** This was definitely not an invasion year, with only three reports, all from Davenport: singles were at Fairmont Cemetery on 1, 3 Jan (JF), 1 was in a yard on 20 Dec 20 to 5 Jan (PCP), and the highest count was 11-15 on 24 Jan (Lewis and Brian Blevins fide PCP). Of 2 CBC birds, 1 was at Davenport also, but the other was at Sioux City.

White-winged Crossbill: 1 was in a Mason City yard on occasion between 13 Nov and 10 Dec (JLW). Glendale Cemetery was host to at least 1 male and 1 female between 15 Jan and 25 Feb (AJ). Fairmont Cemetery had the highest count, up to 4 from 17 to 21 Dec (JF, PCP).

Common Redpoll: A few showed up this winter. Earliest was 1 in Algona on 20 Dec (MK); latest and high count were 6 at Hendrickson M. on 25 Feb (SD). Nine reports of 10 birds plus 5 more from the CBC is not a banner year.

Pine Siskin: This species was decidedly scarce after the past two invasion years, with the high count a measly 5 birds on 27 Jan at a Hardin Co. cemetery (MPR).

American Goldfinch: Numbers were average or better, although few reports were received. Highest count was 150 in a Madison Co. yard during the period (EIA, EuA).

Evening Grosbeak: "A large goldfinch" which the observer (SD) correctly identified as the only report of Evening Grosbeak received was in Glendale Cemetery on Feb 12. Only four others were found, all on CBCs.

CONTRIBUTORS

* = documentation only

Pam Allen (Des Moines); Reid Allen (Des Moines); Eloise Armstrong (Booneville); Eugene Armstrong (Booneville); Ann Barker (Princeton); Brian Blevins (Davenport); Tanya E. Bray (Omaha, NE); Robert Cecil (Des Moines); Dawn L. DeVore (Indianola); James J. Dinsmore (Ames); Steve Dinsmore (Ames); Bery Engebretsen (Johnston); Charles Fuller (Burlington); James Fuller (Iowa City); Douglas C. Harr (Larchwood); Mary Jo Hartogh (Elma); Ann Johnson (Norwalk); Matthew Kenne (Algona); Thomas H. Kent (Iowa City); *Peter Lowther (Chicago, IL); *Robert K. Myers (Perry); Curt Nelson (Mason City); Babs Padelford (Bellevue, NE); Loren Padelford (Bellevue, NE); Peter C. Petersen (Davenport); Diane C. Porter (Fairfield); *Beth Proescholdt (Liscomb); Mark Proescholdt (Liscomb); Doug Rose (Glenwood); *Mindy Rosenbaum (DeSoto N.W.R.); W. Ross Silcock (Tabor); Jim Sinclair (Indianola); Ed Thelen (Spirit Lake); Mike Thomas (Des Moines); John Van Dyk (Sioux Center); Jan L. Walter (Mason City); *Gerald White (Muscatine); Harold White (Estherville); and Barbara L. Wilson (Hastings).

OTHER OBSERVERS

Neil Armstrong, Corey Blevins, Lewis Blevins, Beth Brown, Ed Burkhardt, Mrs. Ed Burkhardt, Marlin Cook, Andy Fix, LaVonne Foote, August Geberding, Jan Greer, Phyllis Harris, Rick Hollis, Sharon Laub, Jody Millar, Bob Moats, Don Moeller, Lois O'Gara, June Parks, Mary Lou Petersen, B. J. Rose, Roger Rose, Lee Schoenewe, Nancy Schoenewe, and Walter Zuerdeeg.

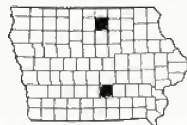
COMMENT

I want to express thanks to all who contributed, either directly, or through another person. I was impressed by the geographic coverage this year, with welcome additions in northcentral Iowa in particular. Maybe great rarities do not appear there as often, but as a compiler, it helps my overall impression of what is happening with the winter birds when geographic coverage is complete. Please, everyone, continue to provide data, even if none of your contributions make into the body of the report. All are entered into the computer and add to my impressions, most of which I write down.

The quality of the reports is also very good. Many contributors are providing brief identification details for accipiters, shrikes, and meadowlarks. This helps our accuracy a great deal. It is easy to assume that a bird that appears to be a common one is in fact just that, but getting into the habit of actually looking hard enough to check out diagnostic combinations of characters decreases sloppiness and on occasion discovers the true rarity (Eurasian Kestrel? Ladder-backed Woodpecker?).

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRDS IN IOWA

THOMAS H. KENT



Frigatebirds are large, long-winged seabirds found mainly in tropical waters. In proportion to their wingspan they are the lightest weight of any group of birds. This accounts for their extreme agility in the air, allowing them to feed by harassing other fish-eating seabirds or to pick fish from the surface of the water. They cannot swim or walk. On the Dry Tortugas I watched a frigatebird outmaneuver a Forster's Tern, forcing it to drop its fish and catching the fish before it hit the water.

Frigatebirds are sexually dimorphic and also have an immature plumage that lasts for four to six years. The five species of frigatebird have many similarities and are said to be among the most difficult birds to identify at sea (Harrison 1983). Two species have a rather local distribution: Ascension Frigatebird in equatorial mid-Atlantic ocean and Christmas Frigatebird in the East Indies. Great Frigatebird and Lesser Frigatebird are the most widespread, inhabiting tropical waters of the Pacific and Indian Oceans and a small area of the Atlantic Ocean off of southern Brazil. The Great Frigatebird's range reaches the eastern Pacific Ocean; the Lesser's does not. Magnificent Frigatebird, the only species whose range reaches North America, is found from northern Argentina north to Florida, in the Gulf of Mexico, from Ecuador to California, and off the extreme west coast of Africa.

There are many records of frigatebirds across North America, many of them following hurricanes. Most of the records are presumed to be of Magnificent Frigatebird, but Great and Lesser frigatebirds have each been recorded once. As Hurricane Gilbert reached the coast of northern Mexico in September 1988, I predicted that it would be a good time to look for them in Iowa. This thought was enhanced when I watched the news and heard that pilots flying into the eye of the hurricane saw thousands of birds circling. Frigatebirds, unlike other seabirds, cannot land in the water without perishing, and their light weight makes them susceptible to being blown far off course.

I did not act on my hunch, but fortunately others were out and found them in Iowa and most nearby states. This article will summarize the documentations of three frigatebirds found in Iowa, briefly discuss identification problems, mention previous unaccepted records for Iowa, and review vagrancy patterns in North America.

FALL 1988 FRIGATEBIRDS IN IOWA

A female frigatebird was found over Clear Lake in Cerro Gordo County and word of the sighting was passed to birders around the state by Curt Nelson and others. The first documentor was Jan Walter who saw the bird briefly at 9:40 a.m. on 25 September 1988 and much closer at 11:20 a.m. She noted the following:

Much larger than Turkey Vulture, with extremely long, narrow wings, inward curve on leading edge of inner wing, sharply swept back at wrist, and pointed at tips. Long tail was deeply forked with forks squared off at tips. Long gray bill was sharply hooked at tip. Bird was all black except for a white breast in a V and the black of the belly extending forward into the breast in a less distinct V. The bird slowly circled above us about 15-20 feet above

tree top level, at one time directly overhead as we stood in the middle of the street. It was silent.

Alan W. Hancock photographed the bird at close range (cover). Between 4:00 and 6:10 p.m. on the 25th several documentors (Steve Dinsmore, Jim Dinsmore, Beth Proescholdt, Mark Proescholdt, Peter Petersen) saw the bird gliding high over the lake, sometimes with Franklin's Gulls. Later that evening Francis Moore (personal communication) saw the frigatebird land in a tree on a small island on the south shore of the lake.

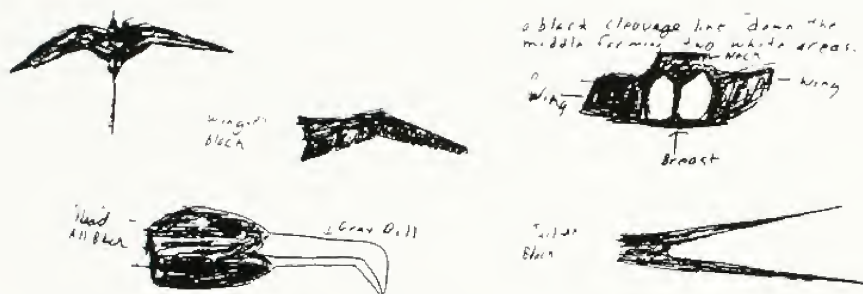
The bird was next seen from 7:10 a.m. intermittently to mid-morning on 26 September by the author and Jim Fuller as it glided over the north shore into a strong south wind. We saw that the ragged tail feathers sometimes showed three forks (photo). Fuller also noted, "The red (pinkish red) feet could be seen tucked up against body on one occasion at close range." He also noted, "There was a white band which started at the neck and ended at mid-wing. There also were subtle white marks which extended a short distance onto the underwing from the white area." Mike Thomas also documented his sighting of the bird from 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. on the 26th. The bird was seen later by others, but the last time it was seen is not recorded.



Female Magnificent Frigatebird at Clear Lake. Photos by Alan W. Hancock (left) and T. H. Kent (right).

A female frigatebird was documented by Dawn L. DeVore at Red Rock Reservoir, Marion County, on 2 October 1988. She saw the bird at about 20 yards by naked eye through her office window at the Visitors Center from 12:45 to 12:50 p.m. and recorded the following description:

The "body was large and black", yet streamlined and slender, the wingspan being as big if not bigger than a Turkey Vulture's. The wings themselves were black, narrow, long, and "bent at the elbows". The tail was V shaped, "black and slender"; like a long Barn Swallow's tail. (Body of bird too big to be a barn swallow.) Sometimes the bird did hold the V closed as it glided in the air currents. The closed V reminded me of a long black ribbon. The head was all black and very streamlined except for the strangest looking bill. The "head seemed smaller" but in proportion with the body. It was black with black eyes with a long slender "gray bill" that had an almost "squared turned down tip". There was no red on the underside of the head. The neck seemed to flow from the head into the body; it was proportional in size to the head and the body. The neck also had no red on it. The back and belly were also black. The breast, however, had white on it. These "white areas" were located just below the neck and just "inside of the shoulder" joints on the breast area itself. There were two areas, not one complete band of white. In fact you could say the normal white area on a frigatebird had a black cleavage line down the middle forming areas side by side. I could not see the legs or feet. The bird was "gliding along in the wind" along the bank of the lake. Then with all my mental notes and the bird out of sight, I ran for a bird book.



Female Magnificent Frigatebird, Red Rock Reservoir, 2 October 1988. Drawings by Dawn L. DeVore.

A male frigatebird was documented by David Youngblut at Red Rock Reservoir, Marion County, from 5:00 to 5:30 p.m. on 3 October 1988. He saw the bird overhead as close as 35 feet and with binoculars and recorded the following description:

Large uniformly dark bird. Long somewhat hooked bill. Wings were long, slender and pointed. The wings were also bent at the elbows much like an Osprey. The tail was long and forked. It was held in the forked position and also held straight. The throat was dark with a reddish patch visible at close range. Underparts all uniformly dark. Feet and legs small, dark, and not real noticeable. I watch this bird for one-half hour. I never once saw the bird flap a wing. The bird came up over the dam and moved to the north side of the lake. It sailed along that side of the lake and would occasionally circle. I moved to the marina in hopes to get a better look and was fortunate enough to watch the bird directly overhead.

These Iowa records occurred more than a week after Hurricane Gilbert, the most severe hurricane ever in the Gulf of Mexico, hit the east coast of northern Mexico on 16 September 1988. Once inland, the storm curved north and produced northeasterly air flow into the Midwest until 23 September. There were many other frigatebird sightings in the Midwest, but details are not available at this writing.

IDENTIFICATION OF FRIGATEBIRDS

Recognition of a bird as a frigatebird is relatively easy, even for birders with little or no experience. The size, wing shape, gliding, forked tail, hooded bill, and dark color are evident at a great distance. Distinguishing male, female, and immature plumages of Magnificent Frigatebird is also easy at closer range. Males are all black except for the red throat, which can be seen when at close range. Females have a black head with white breast. Juveniles and immatures have white on the head, which progresses to brown and black as the bird matures. The amount of white on the breast and belly progressively decreases with age.

The male bird at Red Rock Reservoir was not a Lesser Frigatebird, because male Lesser Frigatebirds have a white flank patch that extends into the axillaries. Male Great Frigatebirds have a sandy-brown upperwing bar, but this

is absent in some populations and may be present on some Magnificents. Harrison (1986) says "Field identification of adult males on basis of present knowledge thus appears impossible, although legs/feet of Great Frigatebird usually brighter, more red."

White tipped axillaries forming three or four wavy lines are found in most stages of Magnificent Frigatebird, but not in adult males. Female Great Frigatebirds lack axillary marks and have a gray-white throat and sandy-brown upperwing bar. Female Lesser Frigatebirds have a white upper wing bar and white extensions from the belly into the axillaries. The pattern of white on the throat, breast, and axillaries of the female frigatebird at Clear Lake as shown in the photographs appears to clearly eliminate Great and Lesser frigatebirds. The subtle white marks on the underwing noted by Fuller and the failure of any of the observers to mention an upperwing bar also support the identification of Magnificent Frigatebird. The drawings of the female frigatebird at Red Rock Reservoir show a white pattern that fits Magnificent (dark throat, no axillary extension).

The North American record of Lesser Frigatebird was of a male at Deer Isle, Maine, on 3 July 1960 identified from movie film by the white flank patch. The Great Frigatebird record was from Oklahoma on 7 November 1975, but I found no published account of this bird, which is listed by the American Ornithologists' Union Checklist, but not in the American Birding Association Checklist.

OLD IOWA RECORDS

The first mention of a frigatebird in Iowa is only a brief note (Peck 1896):

During the discussion which followed the reading of the paper, Mr. Morton E. Peck reported the occurrence of the Ring-billed Gull and the Man-o'-War Bird at LaPorte, his home place. Mention was made also of the Least Tern, the species having been seen in Winnebago county.

DuMont (1933) adding the following information regarding this record, "Relative to the above observation, Morton E. Peck on October 12, 1932, wrote that the specimen was not taken, but that the bird observed could hardly have been anything but this species."

Anderson (1907) reported, "...Dr. Paul Bartsch told me of a specimen taken near Burlington, Iowa, by a gunner in the latter part of September, 1903, but as it was not known whether obtained on the Iowa or Illinois side of the Mississippi River, the latter may hardly be considered as an official Iowa record."

Paul Bartsch, a noted scientist and early Iowa ornithologist, published a belated note (Bartsch 1922) on a mounted frigatebird he had seen 19 years earlier, which said:

In going over some old journals recently, I found a note that should have been recorded long ago. On a visit to the Lone Tree Club, near Gladstone, Illinois, on October 10, 1903, I saw a mounted specimen of a Man-o'-war-bird. Inquiry revealed that the bird had been found in an exhausted condition on the Iowa bluffs of the Mississippi, immediately south of Burlington, in August of the same year, and that although it had been fed, they had succeeded in keeping it alive for a few days only. I believe this is the first Iowa record for the Man-o'-war-bird (*Fregata magnificens rothschildi*).

Years later photographs of the specimen were found in Bartsch's collection (Briggs 1969). The photographs show a female frigatebird with dark head and throat, white breast, and pale wing bar.

In another belated report, Coale (1910) described a mounted frigatebird he had seen six years earlier:

While passing through Burlington, Iowa, recently, I saw a mounted Man-o'-war-bird (*Frigata aquila*) in a store window. Upon inquiry I was told that the bird was killed in the spring of 1904. It was first noticed by some hunters as it flew along the Illinois shore of the Mississippi, who shot at it, when it turned and flew across the river into the heart of the city of Burlington where it struck an electric light wire and fell into the street. The next day it died and the man who picked it up had it mounted and exhibited in his window. This is the first record for Illinois and also for Iowa, as far as I know.

James Hodges (1949), writing about rare birds he had seen along the Mississippi, included the following account under Man-o'-war-bird:

It was my good fortune on April 1, 1946 to observe this species at Davenport, Scott County. I was coming out of a small stand of timber and happened to look up in the air to see coming toward me the most majestic and graceful bird that I had ever seen. It was heading north at 7:45 a.m. and I had perfect conditions under which to see it. The bird was flying at about 300 feet altitude. The flight was smooth and effortless with its beautiful contoured wings slowly beating the air. It was flying sideways instead of straight ahead as most birds do. It was several miles from the Mississippi River which borders the south side of the county but I believe that the bird was following the course of this river. The plumage of the bird was white suggesting an immature bird. The body of the birds [sic] was very small compared to the size of its wings and tail. The tail was long and dagger like which completed the identification. The text books relate that the tail is forked but from the distance that I saw the bird the tail was shaped much more like a dagger. It has been over two years since I made this observation but I have hesitated publishing it as I thought the veracity of the record might be questioned but after considerable deliberation on my part I think the record should be considered valid. It could be mistaken for no other species that is found in the state of Iowa, in fact no other bird could compare with it in size and beauty of flight...

The Records Committee evaluated these old records in the early 1980s and rejected all of them for various reasons. There was no description by Peck, and Hodges' description is rather sketchy, delayed, and expresses some doubt. The varying accounts of the Burlington birds are all delayed and secondhand and leave some doubt as to whether there were one, two, or three birds. It seems odd that Bartsch, who compiled a bibliography of Iowa birds for his Masters Degree thesis, would not have referred to Anderson's quote from him relating to a September 1903 record. It seems likely that some, if not all, of these historical records are correct, but, unfortunately the details provided are not complete enough or possibly could have been incorrectly related.

VAGRANCY IN NORTH AMERICA

Magnificent Frigatebird breeds as far north as the Florida Keys, the central coast of Texas, and Baha California. Birds wander in the Gulf of Mexico and up both coasts of United States. East Coast records are fairly evenly distributed from April through September with one or two records from October, December, January, and February. Less than 10 percent of the citations mention preceding storms. Birds have been recorded as far north as New-

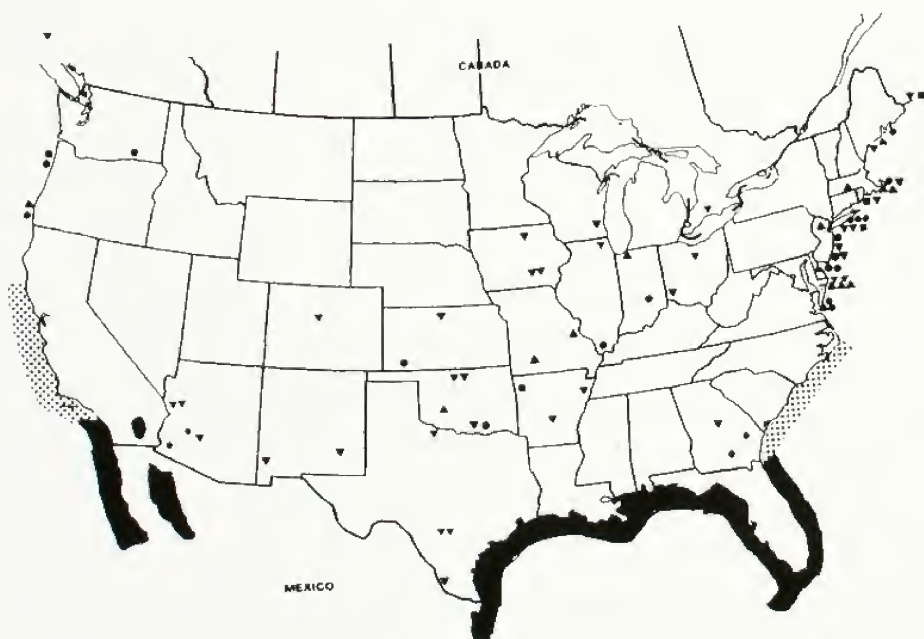
foundland (1) and Nova Scotia (2). Immatures, females, and males are mentioned with about equal frequency.

West Coast records, including California, are mostly from July and August, with one to three records from January, February, March, June, September, and October. Storms are mentioned as a possible factor for about 5 percent of the sightings. Birds are recorded as far north as Alaska (3) and British Columbia (1). The vast majority of West Coast birds are immatures.

Inland records are mostly from August through October with a peak in September. There are four April records, two each from June and July, and one from December. Over 40 percent of the citations mention hurricanes or severe storms preceding arrival of the birds. Unfortunately, the age and sex are infrequently mentioned; I found reports of 1 immature, 4 females, and 1 male, but half of these are the current Iowa records.

These findings suggest three different patterns of vagrancy: birds of varying age and sex wandering north along the East Coast during warm months; immatures wandering north along the West Coast in late summer; and predominantly adults being carried inland during the hurricane season.

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD

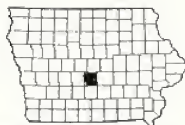


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SABINE'S GULL AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE



At 4:05 p.m. on 20 October 1988, I noticed a small, brown-mantled gull resting with other gulls on a large mud bar north of the Jester Park area of Saylorville Reservoir, Polk Co. Initially, the bird looked like a small, first-winter Franklin's Gull; however, after studying the bird for several minutes, I concluded that the bird must be a juvenile Sabine's Gull. Bob Myers joined me at about 5:15 p.m., and we watched the bird until 5:50 p.m.

The bird remained resting on the mud bar until about 4:25 p.m., when it flew. In flight, the striking wing pattern was obvious. The outer primaries were black, forming a triangle from the bend of the wing outward. The inner wing, out to a line from the bend of the wing to the tip of the inner most secondary, was brown. The rest of the wing was white. In flight, the tail was slightly forked and was white except for a black terminal band. When perched, the upperparts, crown, and nape were light brown. The wings were darker than the rest of the upperparts. The underparts and forehead were white. The legs were black. The bill was also black and was shorter and thicker than the bill of a Franklin's Gull. The wing pattern and gray-brown crown, nape, and upperparts identified the bird as a juvenile Sabine's Gull.

This is the sixth record of a Sabine's Gull in Iowa. There are three old records and three recent ones, all from fall. The other recent records are both from Saylorville Reservoir: 10-24 November 1983 (Kent, T. H. 1983. Sabine's Gull at Saylorville Reservoir. *Iowa Bird Life* 53: 105-106) and 5 October 1986 (IBL 57: 17, 78).

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010

TOWNSEND'S WARBLER IN MUSCATINE COUNTY

GERALD WHITE



On 12 May 1988, I was taking an early morning birding walk in Wild Cat Den State Park. At 7:20 a.m., I was in an area of the woods that had an edge transition zone, when a small bird flew out of heavy cover and landed about 30 feet away in a small bare tree. Although the bird had its back to me, it did turn and look at me twice during its brief period of exposure. I was able to

see the following features: mid-sized warbler by shape and size (about 5 inches long); black crown; back and rump had the base color of dark olive with black spots that were most noticeable around the shoulder area (The spots gave the impression of streaking.); two white wing bars; dull white undertail coverts; some dark feathers in the shape of possible spots near the flank; cheek and ear covered with a good-sized patch of black surrounded with yellow (Each color had intense color saturation.); black throat; and dark and warbler-shaped bill.

I was not able to see the side or complete front of the bird; however, the features of the head and throat as illustrated in the National Geographic Society's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* were those of a male Townsend's Warbler. The black spots clinched my identification in the field. I did not realize until evening that I had seen a record bird (second for Iowa) and, regretfully, had not notified many fellow birders. A subsequent search with tape recordings on the following day failed to produce the bird again.

1505 E. 5th St., Muscatine, Iowa 52761

VERMILION FLYCATCHER AT RICE LAKE

GERALD ANDERSON



A male Vermilion Flycatcher was found catching insects along a small creek that runs into Rice Lake in Worth County at 10:30 a.m. on 13 May 1988. It had a red breast, brown streak between the red on the top of the head and the red throat, and brown wings. It was smaller than a Cardinal. The bird repeatedly swooped down from its perch on a small tree to catch insects and returned to a perch. Curt Rector and I watched the bird for five minutes from a distance of 30 to 40 feet in bright sunlight.

RR2, Lake Mills, IA 50450

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

FROM DIANE PORTER

I have some questions about Chimney Swifts that I hope *Iowa Bird Life* readers can answer for me: (1) Do Chimney Swifts roosting or nesting in chimneys create any fire hazard?; and (2) Do their droppings cause any significant inconvenience or health hazard?

Migrating Chimney Swifts return each year in flocks numbering several thousand birds to ancestral roosting places. I talked by telephone in 1987 with Chimney Swift expert Richard B. Fischer, retired Professor of Environmental Education, Cornell University. He told me that Chimney Swifts do not nest communally. The large aggregations of birds are nonbreeding individuals, those that have finished their nesting for the season, and migrating birds. In light of this information, one would not expect a buildup of nests to cause a fire hazard in the chimneys used by large flocks in migration. Also, I have heard the speculation that the birds' movements in and out of the chimneys actually help clean the chimneys and hence reduce the fire hazard.

Does anyone have personal knowledge on these matters? I would like to hear from people who have examined the inner surfaces of roosting chimneys. Are nests found in roosting chimneys? Do the chimneys used by swifts remain relatively encumbered by soot?

It seems that as chimneys have replaced the hollow forest trees that are open at the top, certain large chimneys have come to be natural history treasures in the midst of towns and cities. In Fairfield, the chimney at the high school shelters several thousand Chimney Swifts each evening in late summer and early fall. People who have lived in the neighborhood for a long time tell me that the birds have been using the chimney in that way since the early 1940s. Although many people enjoy the swifts, a lot of people have noticed the birds hardly at all. (And I've heard several people say of the swifts going down the chimney at dusk, "Those are bats.")

When I have drawn non-birders' attention to the swifts, most are surprised, delighted, and fascinated. That seems to be good for the people and good for the swifts. But I hesitate to do much to publicize the swifts' presence. What if someone decides the swifts are a fire hazard or a health problem? Then an ancestral chimney might be capped and lost to the swifts entirely. That's why I would like to find out the real effects of chimney swifts in the chimneys.

And then there's the question of the droppings. John James Audubon once had a door cut in a hollow tree used by a large flock of Chimney Swifts. He and a companion then went in the tree one night while the Chimney Swifts were roosting inside. Afterwards, one of the men remarked that no dung had fallen on them while they were in the tree (Audubon 1940). This got me to wondering whether perhaps roosting Chimney Swifts did not leave excrement in the chimneys. (Bees take cleansing flights outside the hive, thus preserving the cleanliness of the interior.)

I prevailed upon a chimney-sweeper friend to take me along when he had a call to cap a chimney that swifts were known to inhabit. So one very windy day, I shined my flashlight down a chimney on top of what seemed a monstrously high and steep roof, while Chimney Swifts whizzed over my head. There seemed bird droppings in the chimney, but not a great amount.

Althea Sherman noted droppings in her tower built specially for Chimney Swifts in northeast Iowa. She put a pan in the bottom of her tower each night to catch the droppings; that was one way she determined whether or not swifts had spent the night there (Sherman 1925-1937). But her tower was used only by nesting swifts, not by large aggregations in migration. The possibility remains in my mind that the swifts behave differently in a chimney used by one family than when thousands are crowded into one chimney. Again, I would like to hear from anyone who may have had occasion to examine chimneys used by large groups. I will be most grateful for any light *Iowa Bird Life* readers may be able to shed on these questions.

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908 East Briggs, Fairfield, Iowa 52556